

THE

GOSPEL STANDARD

JANUARY 2005

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

NEW YEAR ADDRESS

Never in recent times has a year ended with such confusion and conflict among the nations of the earth. Truly the Lord is roaring out of Zion, and the heavens and the earth are shaken (Joel 3. 16). In the midst of all the violence and bloodshedding in Iraq we had the appalling massacre of children by Chechen rebels in Beslan. Then towards the end of the year we witnessed the conflict following the disputed elections in Ukraine, thousands taking to the streets in protest.

Especially solemn is the fierce opposition in the world, not merely to the Lord's people and the truth as in Jesus, but even to the basics of Christian living and morality. What was once counted liberal thought has now evolved into "a worrying and aggressive ideology." In Sweden a Protestant minister has been jailed for a month for preaching against homosexuality. The Italian Rocco Buttiglione has been dropped from the European Commission simply for refusing to deny his views on family life and morality.

What can the Lord's people do? As enabled, seek still to bear a humble witness to what is right, not to deviate or lower standards, and to be constant in prayer for the Lord, who is still almighty and on the throne, to intervene. We have never brought politics into our pages, but we cannot forbear expressing our pleasure at the re-election of President Bush. Whatever views we may have about his policy in Iraq, he came out clearly on the side of truth on so many issues, and it is universally conceded that "the moral majority" carried the day. May the U.S.A. be honoured in this, and may our political parties learn a lesson from it. But how sad to read many of the sarcastic and vitriolic comments about President Bush in some papers! As if nothing too bad could be said about his "narrowness and bigotry"! Whatever other people may think, the American people have spoken.

In the Middle East, not only is the gospel opposed by Islam, but the desire is completely to eradicate it. Christian women especially are being targeted, being forced to wear the Islamic headcovering as if they were Muslims. On October 26th a Baptist pastor was shot. On November 2nd a letter was received by church leaders in Iraq threatening to kill one person in every Christian family. Each Lord's day we feel constrained

to pray for the suffering church of God in the earth, “for the most part completely unknown to us, but all known to Thee.”

If, as we believe, the Lord *is* roaring out of Zion, and the heavens and the earth *are* being shaken, may God’s people in this country and throughout the earth know the blessedness of the promise that follows (Joel 3. 16): “But the Lord will be the hope (*margin*, haven) of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.” Amidst all the storms and tempests that threaten the church of God, with John Kent we ask the question: “Is some kind haven near?” And may we prove his answer, pointing to the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ:

“To Him, my only Hiding-place,
Let me for shelter fly.”

* * *

God’s call to His people in this dark and evil day is to “stand ... and having done all, to stand” (Eph. 6. 13). This is what our national church consistently refuses to do. There is compromise all along the line – as if the bishops of the Church of England listen for public opinion, and then follow it. Scripture is no longer the standard; in fact, many do not believe in any absolute standard. Concerning the ordination of women priests, Archbishop Carey (supposedly an evangelical) remarked: “We shall lose all credibility in the eyes of the world if we do not pass this measure.” The same line is taken by many to the ordination of homosexual priests. The report of the 1987 Doctrinal Commission (“We Believe”) states we must make up our faith as we go along. Revelation is neither finished nor complete. We are continuing the unfinished business of the Bible. Doctrine is evolving.

Meanwhile television registers and reflects all these trends and drives them on; the media despise religion and morality. People are encouraged to obey their own feelings. The result? Lawlessness, drugs, illegitimacy, broken marriages, violence.

May the Lord keep His people faithful, and may our young people be specially helped in these difficult days – “looking unto Jesus” in complete dependence, seeking to be found “under the shadow of the Almighty.”

* * *

The great need in our churches is faithfulness to the truth and earnest, continued prayer that the Lord will appear once more and revive His work.

We have thought of Elisha’s first miracle – the healing of the waters of Jericho (2 Kings 2. 19-22). “The situation of this city is pleasant ... but the water is naught, and the ground barren.” In many ways we still

have a "pleasant situation" in our chapels. We have the liberty to worship. We have the glorious gospel of the blessed God still among us. We have a goodly heritage. We have the holy Word of God (in its excellent Authorised Version translation). We have the hymnbook we so much love. In all these things we have a "pleasant situation."

But the ground is barren. Barrenness seems to be the word which aptly describes us. The margin gives the sense of "no births; miscarriages." And again how aptly this describes us! The reason? *There were no life-giving streams.* The water supply brought death.

But there was a remedy. And there still is. Elisha was to take salt and cast it into the source of the waters. "There shall not be from thence any more death or barren land." A strange remedy; but God's remedy; the only remedy; and it availed.

The great point was: there was *divine intervention*. And this is the only thing that will avail for us: if in answer to His people's prayers the Lord most graciously intervenes, and once again the life-giving streams freely flow bringing reviving and spiritual prosperity.

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Concerning all this, it has been said that the preaching today is poor. What about the hearing? Is the spirit of hearing removed? The prophet wrote: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of *hearing* the words of the Lord" (Amos 8. 11). Is there the same urgency in prayer: "Give me Christ, or else I die."

There also is a weakness in not hearing for "edification, and exhortation, and comfort," but rather just listening for a favourite text to be quoted, or even praying, "If I am right, let the minister quote such-and-such a text or hymn." Then it does not matter if the sermon is edifying or not if the word is quoted! Such was not the ministry of J.C. Philpot. What depths he went into, and how carefully his hearers must have had to listen as, with beautiful simplicity, he unfolded his gracious arguments! But above all it was the unction and power of the Holy Spirit.

Again, there can be formality in hearing as well as preaching. One of the Puritans warned against going to hear a minister as if he were saying a piece or acting in a play. We hear for eternity.

Then there is the conversation outside chapel. Does this edify? Well do we remember an old minister saying, "It used to rain when I was a boy, but the godly old people did not talk about the weather!" There was a generation, now taken from us, who had a gracious ability to speak openly and freely about the things of God after a service; to warn or encourage the young people; to ask direct questions; to speak of their

own experience. What a loss to the church of God! "Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men." "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come."

The prophet complained that "the ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts" (Lam. 1. 4). We realise that many have made too much of the Lord's supper, but sadly we often make too little of it. We were very much struck in reading the beautiful, recently produced book, Dr. Owen's communion addresses: the emphasis he lays on the Lord's supper being for the help, comfort, blessing and establishment of the people of God.

* * *

Then in all this what are God's servants called to do? To preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. And it must be in entire dependence and seeking the help of the Holy Spirit, apart from which there can be no real spiritual profit. We are to declare the whole counsel of God, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. We are to set forth covenant truth, covenant realities, covenant love, covenant blood and covenant salvation. We are to insist that salvation, from first to last, is all of grace. Above all we are to preach the glorious Person and finished work of Christ.

1. *Christ's Person.* Error has always assailed the glorious Person of Christ, either in His Godhead or in His sacred humanity. Our churches came into existence as a separate body through a holy jealousy to defend the sacred doctrine of Christ's eternal Sonship in His divine nature, when some Baptists were denying this.

Christ is true Almighty God, the Son of the Father in truth and love, the second glorious Person in the Godhead. It is because of who He is that there is value in the work He performed.

In His incarnation the Son of God took our nature, without sin, a true human body and a true human soul into lasting union with His divine nature. He is "Man to suffer, God to save." "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh."

It is vital that we believe in the true Godhead and true humanity of the Lord Jesus:

"Could we His Person learn to prize,
We more should prize His grace."

And O to see the wonders of His matchless condescension and love in being "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death"! This is the Rock foundation on which the church is built.

2. *Christ's righteousness.* Divine justice demands a righteousness which the sinner cannot bring. In mercy Christ has wrought out a perfect righteousness, in obedience to the law, with which His Father is satisfied. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." "As by one man's disobedience (Adam) many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One (Christ) shall many be made righteous."

This was the glory of the Reformation, the truth revealed to Luther – justification by the imputed righteousness of Jesus. And what a beauty there is in this to a sinner who feels he has none of his own. It is then that the statement that "doctrine is heaven" is truly understood. By faith the sinner sings:

"What wondrous love, what mysteries,
In this appointment shine!
My breaches of the law are His,
And His obedience mine."

3. *Christ's sacrifice.* The purpose of Christ's coming into this world was to save His people from their sins. For this it was essential that He must die in the sinner's place, bearing his sin and bearing it away. "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." There was no other way. But O the wisdom of God in devising salvation's plan in which, through the sacrifice of Jesus, "He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." The resurrection is the outward evidence that the one sacrifice has been accepted.

These vital truths we must contend for and never deviate from them. "Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." In the present day we need what Luther termed "Amen men," men who are willing to stand alone – like Athanasius in his noble defence of the Person of Christ: "Athanasius against the world, and the world against Athanasius."

Many years ago an old writer wrote:

"We have too many who will go right if they are led aright, and who are sure to swim in the right direction if the current is strong enough to carry them with it. These are all very well when the wind blows from the right quarter, but they are of small use in ill weather. At this hour, there is a call for men who can swim upstream."

The same writer goes on to say:

"When a man is himself right, let him not compromise himself by association with those who are not clear in their standing. Clear yourselves of all connections which bring your own faithfulness into question."

Looking back over the past year we have much cause for gratitude. “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him.”

There have been two special anniversaries during the past year which remind us of how thankful we should be for our precious heritage.

1604 was the date of the Hampton Court Conference when James I ordered a new translation of the Scriptures – as a result of which we have our Authorised Version of 1611. For this we should be thankful.

1704 was the date of the death of Benjamin Keach, a name now largely forgotten. Often today William Gadsby is spoken of as the founder under God of our churches; but really many, many years before Gadsby, Hanserd Knollys, William Kiffin and Benjamin Keach were greatly used by God in the establishment of the early Particular Baptist churches.

Keach was a most godly man, minister and theologian, much used by God in contending for the truth and for right order. He also is remembered as the man who introduced hymnsinging in public worship. He himself was but a mediocre poet, but his friend Joseph Stennett, followed later by Isaac Watts, introduced some of the beautiful hymns that have enriched our worship. But above all Keach is remembered for the bitter sufferings he had to endure in his early days (see page 28), not least for his contention for believers’ baptism. More than once he had to suffer in the pillory. “The memory of the just is blessed,” and with gratitude we remember our godly forefathers who suffered so much for the truth’s sake.

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So we look forward to another year. What it holds for us only the Lord knows. What a blessed word that is: “The very hairs of your head are all numbered” – the Saviour’s word! If we only believed what we do believe!

“Since Thou so kind and watchful art,
To guard my head and guard my heart,
And guard my very hair,
Teach me with child-like mind to sit,
And sing at the dear Saviour’s feet,
Without distrust or fear.”

Our God is still almighty, still in control, still on the throne. The prophet reminds us who He is: “Lo, He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is His thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The Lord, The God of hosts, is His name” (Amos 4. 13).

There are many things we do not know, things wisely hidden from us. "Yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God."

We send our prayerful wishes to friends at home and abroad. It was a pleasure to meet so many old friends again in the spring in the U.S.A.

The Lord Himself be with you all.

Above all may we together sweetly prove the angel's words, whatever be our lot: "Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you."

Wishing you every blessing,

With love for the truth's sake

The Editor

B.A. Ramsbottom

THE WORK OF RECONCILIATION

*Notes of a sermon preached by J.H. Gosden at Ebenezer Chapel,
Richmond, on July 12th, 1951.*

Text: "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight" (Col. 1. 21, 22).

This is part of a long sentence which continues to the end of the chapter and, of course, one does not expect to be able to expound even this part of so profound a word, but as the Lord may help us let us first of all look at what these Colossians were. They were sometime alienated and enemies in their minds by wicked works, but there had been a change wrought in them by God the Holy Ghost, and that is of supreme importance to consider; for this is true of us all, that as we are born, and as we live naturally, we are alienated from God, we go astray from Him as naturally as we breathe.

The total depravity of human nature is a doctrine that today is very largely disbelieved, but I believe where the Holy Spirit works, He will show to a person the solemn truth of the universality of his own departure. It covers the whole of our nature; we are alienated from God by wicked works. It does not mean that all natural people live corrupt, unclean, wicked lives outwardly. Many worldlings, it is sad to have to say it, put to shame many who profess the truth of God.

By nature no man seeks after God, no man has a real reverence for God's name. Whether it be said verbally or only in act and thought, it is the language of human nature: "We will not have this Man to reign over us." It may not be apparent to us so much at the beginning as later in

experience. Some of you young people may think some older people exaggerate when they express what is felt of the departure of their own hearts. I said yesterday what I will repeat: I have discoveries today in my own heart of things which I never suspected forty years ago. The capability of sin and the dreadful enmity against God which belongs to my human nature is a trouble and it is a solemn truth, "alienated and enemies." There is a distinction in a sense between aliens and enemies; we may be alienated without being enemies, but here the two things are brought before us: alienation and enmity against God and goodness.

Now if you are born again there will be in your heart at times a painful recognition of this, that you were once entirely under the dominion of sin and yet were not conscious of it because, though an enemy of God and alienated from Him, you were dead, and the dead know not anything. "Dead" – as Paul says to the Ephesians – "in trespasses and sins." Very solemn it is when men are born into this world and go on in that way, dead, aliens and enemies until that work is wrought in them that the Holy Spirit alone can accomplish.

"And *you*, that were sometime"; the whole of the time of our life from our birth until that particular moment when the Holy Spirit entered the heart, renewed the will and turned the feet to Zion's hill. O if we are not alienated now, if we are not enemies now, what a mercy! But some of you may say, "I have that in me, that hatred, that enmity, that carnality, that worldliness that make me greatly fear I am entirely out of the secret of real religion." Well, I know well what you feel. It is a shameful thing and a surprising thing when we are made to know what is within; but the point is this: have you fallen under the conviction, has it been made a trouble to you that you should have a carnal mind that will never be anything else but enmity against God, never be reconciled?

I do not believe that our fallen nature will ever be different from what it is. It is a painful prospect and will be a real trouble to one who would be entirely submissive to God and conformed to Him, but he that declares he is without sin makes God a liar, and he that says he has done no sin is a liar – so says the Holy Ghost by John. Each one here who is *not* now really alienated and an enemy to God by wicked works has been the subject of a change, not a renovation of our old nature but the implantation of a new nature. In every child of God when grace is received it does not make him different in nature but it does subdue the motions of nature. The Spirit lusteth against the flesh and the flesh against the Spirit and these two are contrary the one to the other so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

There is a sacred boldness which I believe none but those who are the subjects of divine grace can understand. The living God can accept nothing but what is perfect. It is very solemn when God sets before a

man his secret sins in the light of His countenance; he no longer feels he compares fairly favourably with his fellow mortals. No, he is brought down to a sense of ruin and helplessness and self-despair; but he does want God, he does want, not God to be changed, but to be changed himself and to come inside that word in the earlier part of this chapter, to be made “meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

“You, that were sometime alienated and enemies,” you fought, fought against God, fought against His will, fought against His dealings with you, deliberately lived only to rebel against Him. O what a solemn state to be in and how painful when there is a consciousness of it! “By wicked works.” It can be truly said of our life from our birth onward that we lived under the power of wicked works, because in our best things we did not aim at the glory of God. There was idolatry, covetousness, pride, anger, hypocrisy, all the evils that more or less reigned in us and over us.

“Yet now hath He reconciled.” Reconciliation to God can only be effected by God Himself; no other power can suffice to do this. It takes a mighty power to change an enemy into a friend and to overcome that native enmity by planting in the heart a new man. “If any man be in Christ,” Paul said to the Corinthians, “he is a new creature” (or a new creation), a work of the Spirit renewing the soul, illuminating the understanding and reconciling the heart to God, to His Word, to His will, to His ways, and therefore making the sinner know, feel and acknowledge that he is wrong.

I believe true religion generally begins by a man being brought to realise he is wrong. Natural religion generally begins by people suddenly finding out that they have some sort of goodness. How did yours begin? If it began by the Holy Ghost, it must have begun by some solemn conviction of your state as a sinner before a sin-hating and holy God. “When He” – the Spirit of truth – “is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16. 8). O what a solemn thing it is to be distant from God through wicked works; but my friends, if you are there feelingly, if the Lord has shown you where you are, found you out, and moreover if He has given you a real, anxious longing desire to be near Him, to be reconciled to Him, to find peace with Him, then there is a work begun in your heart that the Lord Himself will never forgo, never abandon, never deny, but complete. O the deep feeling of need, of helplessness, of desire, of fear, of shame, that is felt in a sinner when the Lord first comes to him and awakens him to his state!

Now that is the beginning of reconciliation, experimentally, those deep desires which He creates, that longing to be found in peace with God, to have that distance taken away and the evils and corruptions that

rise up within destroyed, to be at peace with God. Have you these desires? Has the Lord made you feel:

“Less than Thyself will not suffice
My comfort to restore;
More than Thyself I cannot crave,
And Thou canst give no more”?

Has He given you that desire? Well, if He has, the desire will not satisfy you, but it will sometimes consume you, and you will feel you break in your spirit for the longing desire you have for Himself and after a sense of His love and an assurance that all is remedied between you and God.

“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your minds.” Why, I believe sometimes a person may have such violent enmity rise up in his heart against God that he could pull God from His throne. I know that in my own heart. That is the principle that reigns in those who are in their natural state; but to know it and to tremble on account of it and to pray to God to kill that enmity is another matter.

“Yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death.” Here is a great mystery. The reconciling work with respect to God on behalf of the church of God was effected by the death of Christ; the experience of that reconciliation is by the work of the Holy Ghost in the soul. You find the same truth expressed in 2 Corinthians 5. 19: “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Paul winds up that chapter with that remarkable, pithy declaration of the doctrine of substitution: “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” When God laid upon His dear Son, by divine imputation, under His covenant of grace, the sins of His sinful people, and by His infinite justice dealt with those sins in His beloved Son who bore the curse due to those sins in His holy, harmless, undefiled body as their Surety, it was there that reconciliation was effected. Reconciliation is not merely a change in the sinner’s heart but it is a removal legally out of the way of every quarrel between the person and God. No change in us could do that; only the work of Christ could take away the curse.

Some people look upon a notion of Christ as being some token of salvation, but something vastly more than that is required and that is the *work* of Christ for His people. O what a work it was to reconcile poor sinners to God, when the Lord Jesus, as it is said in a later part of this Epistle, should nail to His cross the enmity and the handwriting of ordinances which was against the church. He nailed it to His cross. He bore in His own body on the tree all the sins, all the innumerable sins of His innumerable people and put them away effectually and eternally by His precious sacrifice. This work can never be undone. O how blessed

is that truth expressed by the Saviour on the cross: "*It is finished.*" We have nothing to pay, and apart from the payment Christ made could never be reconciled to God experimentally, a discharge through faith in Jesus Christ. Confession alone would not do it if Christ had not died. Let us never in the slightest degree seek to minimise the work wrought outside the sinner by the Saviour, for although the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul is essential for salvation, yet there could be no work of the Holy Spirit in the soul if it were not for the work, outside the sinner, of the Son of God incarnate, Christ the Mediator, Surety and Substitute.

"And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death." This brings in of necessity the possession by the Son of God of a body of flesh, a human nature. The assumption by Him of our nature is one of the greatest mysteries that has ever been known. O what a mystery it is! It may seem profound but it comes very near to us; He is not ashamed to call His people brethren. He partook of the flesh and blood of the brethren, and what for? For two purposes. One was the great, chief purpose, the redemption of His people, and the second was to set an example that they might walk in His steps.

The first is the chief. O what a work it was that He, who is God, should become Man in order to remove sin, to pay the debt and to make an honourable way back to God for those who are ruined and condemned and must be eternally lost. He is faithful. Reconciliation was an extensive work for Christ who spent His life and suffered His death, all for this reconciliation with God. He could not change, could not sully His holiness, could not reduce His standard; He would save His people. Christ restored to human nature its glory when the Son of God assumed our nature. There was an innocent Man. O the innocence of Christ, the perfection of His humanity! Yet notwithstanding that perfection, there was no visage marred like His visage. The reconciling work was in the whole of His human nature, soul and body.

It was "through death," a death that has no parallel, that death that took away sin. It was a vicarious death, a substitutionary death. The Lord Jesus died a voluntary death in the discharge of the service He undertook for His people in things pertaining to God. Does He attract you? Does His work attract you? Or do you say these are far off and distant things in which we are not particularly concerned? If you are not concerned in them, eternal woe belongs to you. I feel the chief concern of every quickened sinner is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, and be made conformable to His death and to the resurrection of the dead. If Christ is not attractive to us, then we are dead; and if He never is attractive to

us and we can be satisfied with our so-called religion, that religion will sink when we die.

“Yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death.” This reconciliation was complete legally when Christ died. Nothing less than that was intended by the Lord Jesus when He said, “It is finished.” The responsibility for the sins of His people which He assumed in the covenant was then ended because those sins were put away by that sacrifice, and the proof of it was when Christ rose again from the dead. He did not lie under the power of death; death could not hold Him. There is a great deal of truth in that statement. He could not be held of death. Why? Because that for which He died was taken away by His death and so He rose from the dead the third day, according to the Scriptures, and He lives. O sometimes in your very heart you may feel a thrill, if I may so express it, in the fact that Christ *lives*. I believe David did when he broke out in that word: “The Lord liveth; and blessed be my Rock; and exalted be the God of my salvation.” You may not be able to use the personal pronoun; you may be afraid to claim Him as *your* Rock and the God of *your* salvation; but you will be able to say as a convicted sinner, “There is all my hope; if I have an interest in Him all will be well”; and that is what you will seek after.

He ascended on high. What to do? To carry on His people’s cause there. He left this world for the glory of His Father’s throne. He presents before His Father the names of His people, those whom He reconciled by His life and death; He presents them before God. He represents them there. O what a representation Christ is of His church to God in heaven! He represents God to His people by His Spirit; He represents His people to God by His presence at the right hand of His Father.

“To present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight.” How can this possibly be? Here is a sinful, polluted creature, ignorant, full of sin, weak, dark; how can he be before God “holy and unblameable and unproveable”? By the presentation of him before the Father by His dear Son. This presentation is two-fold. First of all, He presents His people in heaven now; He represents them there, represents them there as their Intercessor. When they pray, when they are constrained to confess their sins and to plead for mercy, as did the publican, they have a Friend in court, a great High Priest in heaven. O what a word is that in the Hebrews: “But this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Now that comes close to personal experience.

The doctrine I have stated is very substantial, but our experience sometimes seems wrapped up in our feelings. You will never make a religion of your feelings if you are taught by the Spirit but, on the other hand, there will be feeling in your religion, the feeling sometimes of hatred to sin, a feeling of desire, and sometimes of love to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now prayer is the Christian's native air, real prayer is a sign of a living soul. The apostle addresses the Corinthian church as being "called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." If you are a real, praying soul and a convicted sinner calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus, coming to the Father, seeking the shelter of that name and the blood and righteousness of Christ for mercy, you have the love of God in your soul. But what you will want in prayer will be access and acceptance. You feel deeply your unfitness to approach the great and holy God. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me"; there is no other way and O what a way it is! There is a risen Christ, a condescending, faithful High Priest, a glorified Man in heaven to represent the feeblest, weakest, the unworthiest praying man before the Father.

"To present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight." This presentation before God of sinners means the merit of Christ is attributed to the sinner, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him. The transfer was made at the cross, but the experience of that transfer is in answer to prayer when you get a smile from God, when you understand a little of what that hymn means,

"Tis He, instead of me, is seen,
When I approach to God."

You will just get an inkling of this. He presents you in the merits of Christ, at whose hands Jehovah received a full obedience and at whose hands the law was completely honoured by His precious death. Christ is in heaven; He accomplished this work. May the Lord bring us into a gracious acquaintance with Him and with the Father through Him, so that peace with God and peace of conscience may flow into our souls. Amen.

Friends live apart, those whom we have known and loved are taken home, there are few opportunities for union and communion amongst Christian friends; but the Lord is ever nigh, ready of access by night and by day, full of pity and compassion to poor, sin-sick souls, and able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. He never disappoints any who trust in Him, is more willing to hear than we to pray, and more willing to give than we to ask. The great, the only real grief of soul is that it should sin against Him, be denied His presence, not get a word from His lips, a smile from His face, or a touch from His hand.

J.C. Philpot

FROM EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING

*From a sermon preached by Joseph Irons
on the first Lord's day in 1850.*

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Hallelujah!” (Psa. 106. 48).

Is it possible, beloved, that we can begin the first Sabbath of the new year with any language more cheering, gratifying and comforting to our souls, or glorifying to God, than this? If we were to take review of the year – let me say years – that are past, and were to summon the utmost of our powers of recollection, to make out as long a catalogue as possible of trials, of sorrows, of cares, of difficulties, of sharp exercises of body or mind, and all the rest of the trials of the wilderness through which we have passed, and set against them the mercies, the supplies, the preservation, the forbearance, the forgiveness of our covenant God, and the knowledge and assurance of our personal interest therein, should we not be obliged to break out into the exclamation of my text, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting”?

I beseech you, glance a moment at those expressions which first fastened my attention upon the text: “from everlasting to everlasting.” How can I carry back the thought, “from everlasting”? Where is it? Who can conceive of it? “From everlasting.” How can I convey the thought, “to everlasting”? The vast extremes are more than enough for man’s mind, more than enough for human intellect. We talk about everlasting and eternal, but who can comprehend it? Who can comprehend what it is? “From everlasting.” Go back millions of ages. Where did it begin? Where is “from everlasting”? Where is “to everlasting”? Go forward millions of ages in contemplation (O sweet contemplation! millions of ages in glory for you and me to realise!) – but where is the end? Where is “to everlasting”? I cannot reach it; my finger will not touch it; my thoughts cannot comprehend it. “From everlasting to everlasting.” The phrase fastened upon me with the sweetest interest.

Now, I just cast a thought back, through the twelve months that have rolled away in the year called the year 1849. January commenced, and the following months rolled on, and December came, and the first day of the year, and the last day of the year, have seemed like a vapour, like a “watch in the night”; or as the psalmist has it again, “a tale that is told.” Contrast it with all its cares, with all its vexations, with all its labours, with all its joys, with “from everlasting to everlasting.” This is our God, “from everlasting to everlasting.” I do not know where to find a finger than can point to it, except it be the crucified finger of my Lord; and I see Him stretched upon the cross, pointing with one extended hand to the

“from everlasting” of His covenant engagements, and with the other to the “to everlasting” of the glorification of His church with Himself; and I cannot understand it anywhere else. In fact, I must go to Calvary to understand anything of it; I must go to Calvary to get a solution of any one difficulty or mystery in the grand scheme of salvation.

You see, beloved, it is not my intention to go on, as some people accuse me of going on, always grumbling and muttering; no, I have begun the year upon another string – whether I shall go on with it is no concern of mine; but this is what I want, that the whole of my remaining hours should be employed in blessing “the Lord God of Israel,” who is “from everlasting to everlasting.”

GOD’S PEOPLE SAFE

By John Kershaw (1792-1870)

That our Lord Jesus Christ is not willing that any of His people should perish will appear evident from the following considerations:

1. *The covenant engagement of Christ.* The council of peace was between the Father and the Word that was made flesh. Hence, He is said to be the Mediator of the better covenant, which was established upon better promises; in which covenant He became Surety, or Bondsman, to the law and justice of heaven, for all the sins of His people; and when our Lord gave the bond in covenant, He did it in full expectation that He would have the debt to pay, as all the sins or debts of His people were placed to His account. Here we see the love and compassion of the Redeemer’s heart; and, as the poet sings:

“This was compassion like a God,
That when the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was His blood,
He pity ne’er withdrew.”

This is the everlasting covenant that is ordered in all things and sure, which was the joy of David’s soul in the prospect of death and eternity, for it was all his salvation and all his desire. It was upon the ground of the covenant engagement of Christ that the promises of His coming into the world were made. He was the Seed of the woman who was to bruise the serpent’s head. God promised Abraham that in his seed all the families or nations of the earth should be blessed. This was a promise of Christ, and Abraham believed it, and rejoiced to see His day, and he saw it and was glad (John 8. 56). Christ was the bright and morning Star that was to come out of Jacob (Num. 24. 17), and the Shiloh that should come when the sceptre was departed from Judah, unto whom the gathering of

the people shall be (Gen. 49. 10). All these promises, and such as are of a like import, are founded upon the covenant engagement of Christ.

And it was upon the ground of this covenant engagement that the prophets were moved by the Holy Ghost to prophesy of the coming of Christ – the place where He should be born (Mic. 5. 2), the awful nature of His sufferings and death, and the triumph of His resurrection (Isa. 53 and 63). The patriarchs and prophets that were before the coming of Christ believed these things, died in the faith of them, and went to heaven; and it is no disparagement upon them to say that they went to heaven upon the ground of credit; for had there been a failure in the payment of the debt they owed, which Christ in the fulness of time engaged to pay, they would have sunk in darkness, horror and despair. But, blessed be the name of the Lord, He failed not, nor was discouraged (Isa. 42. 4), but in due time paid the debt with His life and blood.

2. *Christ becoming incarnate for the express purpose of saving His people* is another proof of His unwillingness that any of them should perish. It being utterly impossible for us to save ourselves by any works of righteousness done by us, when we were utterly without strength, in due time Christ came. Not all the blood of bulls and goats that was spilt on Jewish altars could make a satisfactory atonement to divine justice for sin. Therefore Jesus, in prophetic language, said, “Lo, I come, in the volume of the book (of God’s decrees and of the prophets) it is written of Me, to do Thy will, O God.” He threw by His radiant glory which He had with the Father “before the world was,” and veiled His Godhead in a tabernacle of clay, being made of a woman, and made under the law, to redeem His people from under the curse of the law, being made a curse for them (Gal. 3. 13, 4. 4, 5). He came to seek and to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ came into the world to save the very chief of sinners. Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and bring life and immortality to light through the gospel (Heb. 2. 14; 2 Tim. 1. 10).

3. *Christ making an end of the sins of His people, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness for them* is another proof of His unwillingness that any of them should perish. Christ is our spiritual scapegoat, on whom all the sins of His people were laid, and He carried them into the land of forgetfulness, never more to return (Lev. 16. 21, 22). “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all”; “He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isa. 53. 6, 12); “He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin (by nature or practice, being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners); that we might be

made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5. 21). Christ appeared "once in the end of the world (the old dispensation) to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." He is said to have "finished transgression," to have "made an end of sin," to have made "reconciliation for iniquity," to have "brought in an everlasting righteousness," and to have "sealed up the vision (of Jehovah in His ancient councils), and fulfilled the prophecies" (Dan. 9. 24).

O my friends, Christ having made an end of sin and put it away is a sweet doctrine, and it has often warmed and animated my soul. Thus saith the Lord, "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve" (Jer. 50. 20). And how sweetly does the poet sing of this blessed riddance of sin:

"Now if we search to find our sins,
Our sins can ne'er be found.

"Awake, our hearts, adore the grace
That buries all our faults;
And pardoning blood, that swells above
Our follies and our thoughts."

Beloved, as our sins are thus put away, made an end of, removed as far as the east is from the west – two opposites that can never come together – they cannot appear against us to condemn us. Hear what the Apostle Paul saith: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"; for their transgressions are blotted out as a thick cloud, and their sins as a thick cloud. Yes, beloved! though they often appear to us of so aggravating a nature that they seem to be of a scarlet or crimson hue, yet they being washed away by the blood of the Lamb, we shall be white as snow or as wool; yea, though black in ourselves as the tents of Kedar, we are white and comely through the comeliness that He hath put upon us (Song 1. 5).

Not only are our sins thus absolved through the blood of the cross, but heaven is well pleased for the righteousness' sake of Christ, for He hath magnified the law and made it honourable (Isa. 42. 21); and this righteousness is of God imputed unto us (Rom. 4. 6). The language of Paul (Phil. 3. 9) is the prayer of every one that is born and taught of God: to "be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith"; and this righteousness is said to be "unto and upon all them that believe." So then, being "complete in Christ," and "accepted in the Beloved," "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," our safe standing for eternity is as we stand in Christ; and of Him in the language of the poet we joyfully sing:

“Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
 My beauty are, my glorious dress;
 Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
 With joy shall I lift up my head.

“Bold shall I stand in that great day,
 For who aught to my charge shall lay,
 While through Thy blood absolved I am
 From sin’s tremendous curse and shame?”

4. That Christ is not willing that any of His people should perish is moreover evident from *His willingness to die for them*. When the hour drew nigh that He was to be delivered into the hand of sinful men, to be arraigned at Pilate’s bar, and crucified and slain, we find Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, resisting unto blood, striving against sin. Judas, who betrayed Him, knowing the place where He was (for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples), went with a band of men and officers, and entered the garden, having lanterns and torches, and weapons to take Him. Here behold His willingness to die for His people! Instead of fleeing from them, bold as a lion, He went forth to meet them and said unto them, “Whom seek ye? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am He.” And – being confounded “they went backward, and fell to the ground. Then asked He them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am He: if therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way” (John 18. 4-8).

In all this, my friends, we see the willingness of Jesus to lay down His life for His people. He saith, “Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10. 17, 18). And again He saith, “I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep” (John 10. 11). And it is evident from what our Lord says in verse twenty-six of this chapter, that all men are not His sheep: “Ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep; as I said unto you, My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.” For “when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, and the goats on the left.”

For the sheep are the objects of the Father’s everlasting, electing love, and the purchase of the blood of the great Shepherd. Our Lord hath bought His people at too dear a rate ever to suffer any of them to perish.

Had the Most High God, "Possessor of heaven and earth," and all that is therein (Gen. 14. 19), given the sun, moon and stars, the gold and the silver, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, for the redemption of His people, the price would have been amazingly great, but infinitely insufficient to redeem them. And, great as such a price would have been, it is not to be in the least degree compared with the price that has been given – the precious blood of Christ! For Christ gave "His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20. 28); to wit, for as many as were ordained by the Father unto eternal life. Paul tells us that Christ "gave Himself for us" (mark this, my friends!) He "gave Himself for our sins" "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour"; "that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Gal. 1. 4; Eph. 5. 2; Tit. 2. 14).

Behold how evident it is that He is not willing that any of them should perish; for, to secure our everlasting welfare, He became our Bondsman, our Surety, in the covenant of grace, in the councils of eternity, in the fulness of time becoming incarnate, that He might save us from our sins, and deliver us from the wrath to come; putting away all our sins by the sacrifice of Himself, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness to justify us; giving Himself for us, that He might destroy death and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; being the plague of death and the destruction of the grave; bringing life and immortality to light through the gospel; and being delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.

"Who," therefore, "shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us"; and because He lives, we shall live also. Yes, my brethren, our great High Priest has entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us, being exalted "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come"; and having all things put under His feet, and being given to be the Head over all things to the church (Eph. 1. 21, 22). He tells us that all power is given Him in heaven and in earth. As Mediator, He hath power given Him over all flesh, that He might give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given Him.

So, my friends, it is clear from the testimony of God that the work of redemption is finished by Christ, and that all power is in His hands; therefore He will have His people with Him in glory.

This article is taken from part of a sermon of John Kershaw's that was preserved. The sermon was preached in 1834 at Trowbridge, where John Warburton at that time was pastor.

THE HYPOCRITE

By F.W. Krummacher (1796-1868)

It is a mysterious event which we see in Matthew 21. 19, hovering like a black thunder-cloud in the midst of the bright azure of the gospel-sky. The Saviour is coming from Bethany, and is on His way to Jerusalem. He feels the cravings of hunger – not merely in appearance, but in reality. He was willing to be tempted in all points like as we are, and that no affliction should befall us in which we could not have Him for a companion.

On the road where He is walking, a number of trees are standing, but still devoid of foliage. It is early in the year. Emblems of sincerity, they present themselves to Him as they are, and seem, with their naked branches, stretching towards heaven, to say, “If the first ray of the sun would but fructify us, we would gladly afford Thee refreshment.” It is not these trees which the Saviour condemns. He grants success to the sincere, the ingenuous and the faithful. Many a little shrub stands also by the wayside. Fruit they cannot yet offer, but already possess tender and promising buds. These shrubs He blesses. In the germ He sees the fruit. He knows how to appreciate the green and hopeful stalk.

He silently proceeds further, when at a distance a tree presents itself to His view, which promises richly to satisfy His hunger. It is a fig tree, one of that genus which is considerably in advance of all the rest around it. Whilst the former are still standing bold and naked, it shows a luxuriance of foliage, and glitters in the freshness of its verdure. You are doubtless aware that it is the nature of the fig tree first to put forth its fruit, and afterwards its leaves. The thick-leaved tree, therefore, justified the conclusion that it must conceal figs between its boughs, which are nearly ripe. But what is the result? Alas! the tree in its proud and promising summer-dress has mocked the hungering Son of God. For on separating the branches to pluck the figs, He finds indeed an abundance of leaves, but after examining the tree from the root to its summit, He can nowhere find any fruit, much less such as is eatable and ripe, notwithstanding its sunny aspect, rich soil and the excellent care taken of it.

What was the tree? A hypocrite, a deceiver. And what art thou, who appearest here as a worshipper of God? Art thou anything better? I see indeed the luxuriant foliage in which thou art adorned; I behold thy prostrations before the Almighty; I perceive solemnity and devotion in thy features, and hear the sounds of faith and contrition which proceed from thy lips. But how is it with the fruit beneath this outward appearance? Art thou in reality so humble, so opposed and inimical to sin, and so full of hunger after God and His grace? Ah, there are not

many of us who are really so! Dissimulation reigns dreadfully among us. I should esteem it honourable were I to hear one and another of you say, "I am still devoid of fruit, and therefore I reject the leaves. I will not join in singing this or that particular hymn. I will refrain from such and such a pious expression and gesture." But instead of this, you act the part of the saints with those that are so, and walk as whited sepulchres. And your whole deportment, conduct and appearance is only like the fresh verdure of the fig tree in the gospel. It allures the Lord to it, as if there were something to be gathered from it; but woe unto you! He approaches, and your divine worship is deception and a mask.

After the Lord had minutely examined the tree by the way, the appearance of which was so promising, but had found nothing, He opens His mouth, not to bless, but to utter a curse; and speaks aloud that His disciples may hear and never forget it: "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever." And lo! scarcely have the words passed His lips than they sink like a gangrene and deadly poison into the heart and root of the tree. Its luxuriant foliage begins to wither and die; and when the disciples pass by it the following day, the dried leaves fall rustling to the ground, and the tree is a heap of dead and naked boughs, through which the wind whistles – a skeleton, fit only for the fire.

"And when the disciples saw it," says the sacred historian, "they marvelled," smote their hands together, and said with a horrifying presentiment of what the dead branches would whisper to them: "How soon is the fig tree withered away!" The trees which presented themselves as they really were, and promised nothing which they did not possess, and were still waiting for the fructifying sun, stood there with swelling buds, and the spring smiled through their flourishing boughs.

"Every plant," said the Lord once, "which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15. 13). Consolatory as these words are for those who know that they are of the Father's planting, yet equally dreadful must they sound in the ears of those to whom they announce a horrible fate. The plants here intended are members of the Christian church; religious people, not reprobate characters, nor enemies to the truth, but persons of Biblical knowledge and devout walk. But their whole religiousness is not the work of God, but of man, and is either their own, or done to them by others. It is a Levite's dress, with which a Canaanite decks himself; the colour of the sanctuary, with which the sinful, unregenerate nature, has painted itself. Such persons insinuate themselves into the ranks of the godly, without being the subjects of divine influence or guidance. They therefore will not remain in their place, but will eventually be carried away with the wicked. The cornflowers with which they adorn themselves are only weeds. The

husbandman says, "I have not sown you. Why cumber ye the ground? Away into the fire!"

"What kind of a plant am I then?", I hear some of you saying with a sigh. It is not to be wondered at that an expression of the Lord's like this is also able to cause the true children of God disturbance, especially those who have enjoyed a godly upbringing, and have gradually come to Christ. But let no one give way to doubt too soon. You know that there are two kinds of plants, as regards their origin, even in the garden of nature – layers or cuttings, and such as grow from seed. The first are twigs cut off from a living tree, which when plunged into the earth gradually send forth roots, and thus attain to an independent life and existence. The others, on the contrary, shoot forth by a divine miracle from the seed. Thus there are also two different kinds of true Christians, with respect to the manner of their having come to God. The one is like the plant which proceeds from a seed or kernel. They were suddenly snatched from their life of sin, in an obvious and wonderful manner, and without any particular preparation, and begotten to newness of life. Such was the case with the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, with Saul, and the Philippian jailor. Such individuals are not easily rendered apprehensive that the heavenly Father has not planted them. Others, on the contrary, resemble the cuttings and layers. They appear as twigs cut off from godly parents and friends or teachers. By these they were imbued with religious knowledge, and led on to a devotional life. Though their Christianity may have long been only a dead formality, yet gradually and imperceptibly, under the silent influence of divine grace, it put forth living roots. And now they are like the others, not merely separated branches, but plants of God, possessed of individual life in the garden of the true church, to the honour of God. Hence everything depends upon the root, the living and flourishing root, and the latter rests in the believing view which the heart, impoverished by the consciousness of its sin and misery, fixes upon Christ as the only ground of salvation and of hope.

When we are in the furnace we rarely see what benefit it is producing, or what profit is likely to arise to ourselves or to others out of it. Our coward flesh shrinks from the cross and until submission and resignation are wrought in us by a divine power, and the peaceable fruits of the Spirit begin to show themselves, we cannot bless the Lord for the trial and affliction. It is true that our trials vary as much as our outward circumstances or inward feelings, and each, perhaps, thinks his own trial the heaviest. But no doubt infinite wisdom appoints to each vessel of mercy those peculiar trials in nature or degree which are required to work out God's hidden purposes.

J.C. Philpot

THE MARRIAGE COVENANT

By Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

Now having given this short account of the nature of the espousals [see August 2004, page 254], I shall evince that sinners may be espoused to the Son of God. “Behold, we bring you glad tidings of great joy”; if when sinners are made willing to be espoused to Christ, He is willing; all is ready to the bride’s consent. To clear this, consider these following particulars.

First, this match was from eternity projected and concluded in the cabinet council of the Trinity (Jer. 31. 3): “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” God, from eternity, foreseeing that all mankind would be ruined by the fall of Adam, and not willing that the whole kind should be lost, set on foot this project, a proper project for recovering lost sinners and securing them when recovered. Man being joined to God at first in a simple covenant of friendship, that covenant was found too slender a bond for such an unstable creature: wherefore a marriage covenant is devised; for that will separate betwixt friends, under the strictest bonds of friendship, which cannot separate betwixt husband and wife. Now, the King’s friend turning to be His enemy by the breach of the first covenant, to bring the criminal out of prison to court again, and restore her to favour, it is concluded that she be espoused to the King’s Son, and so united to Him in such sort as there should never be such a fatal breach betwixt God and the sinner again.

Secondly, the Bridegroom and all His relations are well pleased with the match. We have His own mind in the text (Hos. 2. 19), “I will betroth thee unto Me for ever.” But will He indeed betroth me? may the sinner say. “Yea, I will betroth thee,” saith our Lord in the following words, twice in one verse, and a third time again in the verse immediately following. Why, truly, it is hard for sensible sinners to believe it; yea, this speaks Him to be peremptory in it; He will not be diverted from it.

If ye would know how it agrees with His Father’s mind, Isaiah will tell you, “The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness’ sake” (Isa. 42. 21). Yea, He becomes a suitor to you in favour of His Son, He solicits for Him (Matt. 17. 5), “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.”

It is very agreeable to the mind of His Spirit; for the words He puts in the mouths of all His servants, in reference to it, are full of good will to the match: “All things are ready: come unto the marriage” (Matt. 22. 4).

The angels, these glorious inhabitants of the upper house, when first the Bridegroom came in Person into the bride’s country, in pursuance of

the blessed project, sang to His arrival, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2. 14). Yea, there is a full satisfaction with it through all the Bridegroom's country: joy appears there in every face, upon the success of it. "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15. 7).

I might here tell you that the mighty stir made about this match in the bride's country, to hinder it, is a plain evidence of the reality of it. All her relations are against it. When the royal Bridegroom was going forth to pursue His design of love to lost sinners, their father, the devil, addressed Him, and offered Him "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," if He would give over the suit (Matt. 4. 8, 9). When that did not take, he assaulted Him and murdered Him, by his hellish agents, that so the designed match might be marred. But the blessed Jesus having overcome death and the grave, and sat down at the right hand of the Father, so that he can reach Him no more; he turns his rage against the bride, and employs his power to the utmost against her to stop it.

No sooner does she begin to lay to heart the proposed espousals than she finds her own people and her father's house violently set against it, and must lay her account with vehement tossing she was not acquainted with before. Her father, the devil, misrepresents Christ, as a Husband she can never have a comfortable life with. If that prevail not to make her lay aside the thoughts of it, he rages and threatens: if she will proceed in it, he shall cause her to repent that ever she entertained the motion, and bring her back again from her new Husband, to her great confusion; and that therefore it is better for her to draw back in time, and take second thoughts of the offers made her by other hands.

Her friends, even the world that lieth in wickedness, use all methods to discourage her. They cry out, she will stain the reputation of their family and disgrace them all: and, be sure, they will make her the fool of the company at least, if their hands be bound that they cannot imbrue them in her blood. And, to crown the difficulty, the hungry children she was wont to feed, (namely) her lusts, and in a special manner, the fondling, the beloved lust, hang about her weeping, because they must be starved if the match go on. All this evidenceth that sinners may be espoused to Christ.

Thirdly, the lawful impediments of this match are all removed at the Bridegroom's expenses and pains. When the purpose of this match was declared, there stood up to object against it parties concerned, whose mouths could not be stopped with fair words. Justice says, The bride is my debtor, and I will not forgive her; and, forasmuch as she hath not to pay, she must be sold into the hand of vengeance, to satisfy the debt (Matt. 18. 25). She is my criminal, saith the law, and I will not pardon her; sentence of death is passed on her (Gal. 3. 10); and whithersoever

one may go to pick out a spouse for himself, he must not go into a prison, and bring forth at his pleasure a condemned woman to be espoused to him; for though marriage break term of service, it must not break law. Therefore there must be an execution day before there can be a marriage day. She is my lawful prisoner, says the devil, and I will not give her up: "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?" (Isa. 49. 24). These were lawful impediments indeed, which, unremoved, would have put an effectual stop for ever to the marriage betwixt Christ and sinners; but His heart was intent upon the match, and therefore He set Himself to remove them out of the way. Accordingly, He became Surety to justice for her debt, and paid it to the last farthing; laid down His own life for the criminal: and now that the ransom is paid, the jailor must needs let his prisoner go.

Fourthly, the marriage contract is drawn up already, and signed by the Bridegroom, bearing His consent to match with the captive daughter of Zion: ye have it in this Bible, ye have it in the text, and the words following, "I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness ... and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord." This is His word, this is His writ, which He hath sealed with His precious blood. He cannot, He will not deny it; and He hath sent it to you, that ye for your part may consent to it, and so the blessed match is made betwixt Christ and you.

"HE LOVED ME, AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME" (Gal. 2. 20).

Dear Friend – Yours came to hand, and I was glad to hear that your daughter was better. I hope the Lord will restore her, and that if He does it will be in mercy, for neither health nor affliction, prosperity nor adversity, honour nor degradation, prove blessings only as the Lord makes them so. Christ and His blessed salvation, brought home to the conscience by the glorious power of God the Holy Ghost, will give solid satisfaction in any situation in life. Then indeed the soul can say, "The will of the Lord be done"; and while a blessed Jesus, in the glorious openings and manifestations of His love and blood, is sweetly enjoyed, the believer can say, "I have all things in Christ"; and the Lord and the soul hold sweet intercourse together.

But when the child of God is left in the dark, or with only just light enough to discover the wretchedness of his corrupt heart, and life enough to feel the risings up of the filth of his detestable old man of sin, and taste and smell enough to be almost suffocated with its horrible stinks,

and thus sinks in sensible loathsomeness; I say, when this is the case, he is in a mournful state, let him have what he may of this world's good; nor can all that men or angels can do make him happy. In this state, men may tell him that he *ought* to believe and be happy, but his case is out of their reach, and out of the reach of any power of man, or of any faith that stands in the power of man. Duty faith and its agents may strut about him, chatter to him, snarl at him, or invite him; but reach his case, or raise him up, they cannot.

But when a Three-One God, made manifest in the glorious Person, work, fulness, worth and worthiness of the Lord Jesus Christ, is made manifest in the conscience, by the divine power and under the bedewing operations and heavenly unction of God the Holy Ghost, the soul enjoys a measure of heaven upon earth. O how cheering, how captivating, how soul-ravishing, how exalting is such a glorious revelation of the Lord to the soul! Here we find sin subdued, the world overcome, devils defeated, and the fear of death swallowed up in the glory of life. Yes, my friend, in vital faith and feeling we can then say, "He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*."

Then in very deed we prove that vital godliness is really and truly personal, and there is an indescribable majesty and glory in Christ, and in all He is, and has, and has done, and has promised to do for us and in us. The sweet truth that "He loved me, and gave Himself for me," flows into the conscience with indescribable sweetness; and O with what solemnity is it again and again repeated, "He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*." Then indeed we feel where we are, and on what ground we stand for eternal glory.

But my friend complains of dreadful darkness of soul, after some such sweet enjoyments. No marvel; no, no; for He and we must suffer together, as well as reign together. Honours crown His brow, He sank into the very depths of horrible deeps, and went into the blackest darkness, to raise up and bring out such poor wretches as you and me. The most we can feel is but little compared with His, and by these things we are led in a measure to know a little of what it cost the Lord of life and glory to redeem and save us, and bring us to Himself, and we are also taught feelingly that all light, life, hope, faith, peace, love, joy and every spiritual grace is of the Lord, and is the Lord's own work both for us and in us, and He both must and shall have the glory. When we are in darkness and in the shadow of death as the effect of our folly and transgressions, and all hope of help faileth us, He is there to put a cry into our hearts to deliver us (Psa. 107. 8-20); and when we have to pass through deep waters, or hot fires, still He is there (Isa. 43. 2); and though we may neither see Him nor feel His supporting arm, He is there, and He is as much our kind friend then as He is when we feel His love, though

we are not able to perceive it. But in the end He will enable us to glorify Him and offer up a pleasant offering unto Him, and solemnly sing, “The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.”

Remember, my friend, that “whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth” (Heb. 12. 6); so that those professors who live wholly without rebukes and chastenings have no scriptural proof that they are the children of God. I have sometimes thought it a great mercy that the people of God, while in this vale of tears, are not at all times either in the deeps of darkness and wretchedness, or in the heights of life, light, and glory; for if either were always the case, they would not be fit to attend to the business of this life, and worldly things must in a great measure manage themselves for them; for in one case they would be too miserable, and in the other too happy to fill up their place in business as needs required.

But the Lord is too wise to err, and though we are often producing some horrible lumber, the Lord keeps a fire and furnace in Zion, and there we must be put to burn up our lumber (Isa. 1. 25; 31. 9; Zech. 13. 9). Satan and corrupt nature can take advantage of the most soul-ravishing moments, views and feelings we are blessed with, to vamp up the mind with pride, when those glorious moments cease; and pride blunts the edge of prayer and praise, and brings on darkness of soul and hardness of heart, and thus we slip into some dreadful gulf. Our enemies now magnify themselves against us (Psa. 38. 16), and we are as a despised lamp in the thought of him that is at ease (Job 12. 5), and he smiles at our weakness; but it is no smiling matter with us; no, no; we feel to our sorrow that we have backslidden in heart, and we are in measure filled with our own ways (Prov. 14. 14). But after all, it is an indescribable mercy that the Lord changeth not, and in the end His gracious Majesty will make darkness light, crooked things straight, and rough places plain, and these things will He do unto us, and not forsake us.

Give my love to your daughter, and tell her I hope I do not forget to pray for her. May the Lord bless her with His sweet presence. Give my love to your husband, to Mr. N., to mine host, to your sister, and to all friends. That the Lord may lead and guide you all into all things, is the prayer of yours in the Lord,

Manchester

W. Gadsby

We need many trials, and a long course of them, to meeken our spirit and give us patience; for tribulation worketh patience, as patience worketh an experience of the mercy and goodness of the Lord, and as an experience of past and present support worketh a hope of support for the future.

J.C. Philpot

PERSECUTION OF BAPTISTS

Benjamin Keach (see page 6) was often seized when preaching and committed to prison, sometimes bound, sometimes released on bail, and sometimes his life was threatened.

On one occasion soldiers, who had been sent into Buckinghamshire to suppress meetings of Dissenters, with great rage and violence swore they would kill Keach. He was seized, tied up on the ground, and four horse soldiers prepared to ride over him to trample him to death. At the last minute an officer forbade it. Keach was then tied behind one of the soldiers on horseback and taken to prison, where he suffered great hardship.

The following is taken from J.M. Cramp (based on Crosby's History of the Baptists). Crosby was Benjamin Keach's son-in-law.

Benjamin Keach, a Particular Baptist minister, wrote a small book for children, entitled, *The Child's Instructor; or, a New and Easy Primer*. In the catechetical portion of the book, Baptist sentiments were inculcated. It was affirmed that "believers, or godly men and women only, who can make confession of their faith and repentance," should be baptized. The personal reign of the Saviour on earth for a thousand years, held at the time by some Baptists [for example, Bunyan], was taught. And, which was peculiarly offensive, Mr. Keach said, that "Christ's true ministers have not their learning and wisdom from men, or from universities, or human schools; for human learning, arts and sciences are not essential to the making of a true minister; but only the gift of God, which cannot be bought with silver or gold. And also, as they have freely received the gift of God, so they do freely administer; they do not preach for hire, for gain or filthy lucre; they are not like false teachers, who look for gain from their quarters, who eat the fat, and clothe themselves with the wool, and kill them that are fed: those that put not into their mouths they prepare war against. Also, they are not lords over God's heritage; they rule them not by force and cruelty, neither have they power to force and compel men to believe and obey their doctrine, but are only to persuade and entreat; thus is the way of the gospel, as Christ taught them."

For this he was indicted at the assizes. The language of the indictment may seem strange to the reader:

"Thou art here indicted by the name of Benjamin Keach, of Winslow, in the county of Bucks., for that thou, being a seditious, heretical and schismatical person, evilly and maliciously disposed, and disaffected to his Majesty's government of the Church of England, didst maliciously and wickedly, on the first day of May, in the sixteenth year

of the reign of our sovereign lord the King, write, print and publish, or cause to be written, printed and published, one seditious and venomous book, entitled, *The Child's Instructor; or, a New and Easy Primer*; wherein are contained, by way of question and answer, these damnable positions, contrary to the Book of Common Prayer, and the Liturgy of the Church of England."

The trial took place October 9th, 1664. [Keach was 24.] Chief Justice Hyde presided, and conducted himself with a malignity wholly unbefitting his office. Under his direction, a verdict of "Guilty" was recorded, and the judge then proceeded to pass sentence, in the following terms:

"Benjamin Keach, you are here convicted for writing, printing and publishing a seditious and schismatical book, for which the court's judgment is this, and the court doth award: That you shall go to jail for a fortnight, without bail or mainprise; and the next Saturday to stand upon the pillory at Aylesbury, in the open market, for the space of two hours, from eleven of the clock to one, with a paper upon your head with this inscription: 'For writing, printing and publishing a schismatical book, entitled, *The Child's Instructor; or, a New and Easy Primer*.' And the next Thursday to stand in the same manner, and for the same time, in the market of Winslow; and there your book shall be openly burnt, before your face, by the common hangman, in disgrace of you and your doctrine. And you shall forfeit to the King's Majesty the sum of twenty pounds, and shall remain in jail until you find sureties for your good behaviour, and appearance at the next assizes, there to renounce your doctrines, and make such public submission as shall be enjoined you."

The punishment of the pillory was abolished by Act of Parliament in the year 1837. The instrument so called was an upright frame placed on a scaffold, upon which the offender stood, his head appearing through one hole of the frame, and his hands fixed in two others. As this punishment was generally reserved for persons guilty of perjury and other infamous crimes, the mob were accustomed to pelt them with rotten eggs or various kinds of filth, and even with stones and brickbats, so that death sometimes ensued. To such an exposure the Lord Chief Justice of England delivered up a worthy minister of the gospel. The sentence was duly carried into execution, and the sheriff, who was himself a fierce opposer of the truth, took care that the judge's directions should be obeyed to the very letter.

It was market day at Aylesbury. The town was thronged. People flocked thither from all parts of the country to see the new and strange spectacle. But though many of them were prepared to deride and sneer, the usual expressions of popular indignation were wanting. Hitherto the pillory had been reserved for the vilest criminals. But Mr. Keach was a

good man, and a preacher of the gospel. They could not find it in their hearts to pelt *him*.

Precisely at eleven o'clock he was placed in the pillory. Many friends attended him, and stood around the instrument of torture for the purpose of sympathy and encouragement. And there, too, stood his wife, and "frequently spoke in vindication of her husband, and of the principles for which he suffered." A true helpmeet!

"Good people," said he, "I am not ashamed to stand here this day, with this paper on my head; my Lord Jesus was not ashamed to suffer on the cross for me; and it is for His cause that I am made a gazing-stock. It is not for any wickedness that I stand here, but for writing and publishing His truth."

"No!" exclaimed an Episcopal clergyman, who was standing by; "it is for writing and publishing *errors*."

"Sir," replied Mr. Keach, "can you prove them errors?"

He would have answered, but he was too well known by the multitude. One told him of his being pulled drunk out of a ditch. Another upbraided him with being lately found drunk under a haycock. At this all the people fell to laughing, and turned their diversion from the sufferer in the pillory to the drunken priest; insomuch that he hastened away with the utmost disgrace and shame.

When the uproar had subsided, the voice from the pillory was heard again. Having somehow slipped one of his hands out of the hole, he took his Bible from his pocket and said, "Take notice, that the things which I have written and published, and for which I stand here this day a spectacle to men and angels, are all contained in this Book." The jailer snatched the book from him, and replaced his hand in the hole.

Still the voice came from the pillory: "A great concernment for souls was that which moved me to write and publish those things for which I now suffer, and for which I could suffer far greater things than these. It concerns you therefore to be very careful, otherwise it will be very sad with you at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven; for we must all appear before His tribunal."

The officers interposed, and he was compelled to be silent for a time. But again he ventured: "O! did you but experience the great love of God, and the excellences that are in Him, it would make you willing to go through any sufferings for His sake. And I do account this the greatest honour that ever the Lord was pleased to confer upon me."

The sheriff was furious, and declared that he should be gagged if he did not hold his tongue. So he refrained from speaking. Yet he could not forbear uttering these few words: "This one 'yoke' of Christ, which I can experience, is 'easy' to me, and a 'burden' which He doth make 'light.'"

When the two hours had expired, he was released, and “blessed God with a loud voice for His great goodness unto him.”

That day week he was exposed to the same indignity at Winslow, where he lived, and bore it with equal patience and manliness. There also his book was publicly burnt, according to the sentence.

A new biography has just been published, *The Excellent Benjamin Keach*, which we hope to review shortly.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Case for Traditional Protestantism, by Terry L. Johnson; paperback; 182 pages; price £6.25; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is a passionate defence of the doctrines of the Reformation. The author’s contention is that this is not an outdated concern, of interest only to students of history, but that the defence of these doctrines is vital today.

The sub-title of the book is *The Solas of the Reformation* – that is, the five great watchwords of the Reformation: *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone), *solo Christo* (by Christ alone), *sola fide* (by faith alone), *sola gratia* (by grace alone), *sola deo gloria* (glory to God alone). The emphasis is on the word *only* or *alone*.

Perhaps the weakest part of the book is the two chapters on “Glory to God Alone,” where the author deals with the effect of the Reformation on theology, worship, church government, family life, culture and society – rather than the sanctifying effect in the life of the believer. We should not have thought that the emphasis on a presbyterian form of church government is of the essence of Protestantism.

Mr. Johnson writes well and lucidly. The work is not strictly history but the various points are opened, explained and insisted on, and then illustrated from Reformation history. The author is very clear on the doctrines and the vital importance of not deviating from them.

We commend this stirring reminder of the need to take a firm stand and not be complacent on these important matters.

Dying Thoughts, by Richard Baxter; paperback; 124 pages; price £4.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Richard Baxter is one of the best known of the Puritans. His famous works, *The Reformed Pastor* and *The Saint’s Everlasting Rest*, have always been highly regarded. But as the introduction to *Dying Thoughts* puts it (and it is a superb introduction), “his theology was flawed.”

Dying Thoughts, first published in 1683, has some good things in it. It is an exposition of Philippians 1. 23, and does not touch the points on which Baxter was in controversy. The chapters are: What there is desirable in the present life; the souls of the godly are with Christ; departing to be with Christ; why it is far better to be with Christ; God makes us willing to depart.

However, we are puzzled why Banner of Truth should publish a work by Baxter at the very same time they publish a book like *The Case for Traditional*

Protestantism – the whole thrust of which is the vital need today to stand resolutely against the views of all those who (like Richard Baxter) are not clear on the vital doctrine of justification.

The erroneous views of Richard Baxter and the Neonomians are very clearly explained (and condemned) in James Buchanan's excellent work on *The Doctrine of Justification* (Banner of Truth: 1984).

BE NOT TROUBLED

"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14. 27).

Be not troubled in heart, for the hills may depart,
And the mountains each one from their place be removed,
Yet I'll never forsake, nor My kindness will take
From thee whom My heart everlastingly loved.

Then be not thou afraid, nor by sorrows dismayed,
Beneath every chastening are treasures of love;
Every season of pain works for naught but thy gain,
And most in thy weakness My strength thou shalt prove.

Be not troubled in heart, ever precious thou art,
More dear unto Me than the store of earth's gold;
Till I found thee I sought, at tremendous cost bought,
Now o'er thee rejoicing with gladness untold.

Then be not thou afraid, be thy mind on Me stayed,
Every moment I keep thee with tenderest care,
Will supply all thy need, by the "still waters" lead,
And give thee "the treasures of darkness" to share.

Be not troubled in heart, though unworthy thou art,
More black to thyself than the darkness of night;
Yet to Me thou art fair, far beyond all compare,
All comely and spotless, and all My delight.

So be not thou afraid, I have promised My aid,
Whoso toucheth you toucheth the light of Mine eye;
Thou art safe in My hand, none My arm can withstand,
Every weapon to hurt thee all powerless shall lie.

Be not troubled in heart, I have called thee apart,
For the praise of My glory I thee did prepare;
Here My servant to be, till My smile thou shalt see,
For ever and ever My kingdom to share.

Be thou not then afraid, for thy faith I have prayed
That it fail not until thou hast "finished the fight";
More than conqueror come to the rest of thine home,
To walk with thy Saviour in garments of white.

Kate Staines

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
FEBRUARY 2005

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

A WARNING TO PREACHER AND HEARER

“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim. 4. 16).

“Take heed.” This is a solemn word of warning – but not because the Apostle Paul has any doubt about Timothy. *Every* gospel minister needs it, whether we are old or young, whether we are at the beginning or the end.

“Take heed unto thyself.” Now notice that Paul does not begin with the preaching, with the ministry; he begins with the minister, the man himself. What a minister is, not just what he preaches, is vital. There have been some ministers who have preached wonderful sermons. In Puritan times there was a minister whose reputation was that “he preached so well that the people wished he would never leave the pulpit, but he lived so badly when out of the pulpit that they wished he would never enter.”

Many a godly minister has not had great ability, has not been an orator, but has been such a man of God, filled with the Spirit. And what blessing attended! M’Cheyne said, “A holy minister is a fearful instrument in the hands of God.”

So “take heed,” first of all, “unto *thyself*.” It is possible for us preachers to have a “ministerial religion.” What do we mean? Well, we are in prayer or meditation, and a solemn word strikes us. Immediately we think, “That will be a suitable text for next Lord’s day.” But perhaps it is meant for a rebuke to us personally. Or again a passage rests sweetly on our spirit, and again we think, “How nice for the prayer meeting address!”

“Take heed unto *thyself*.” A gospel minister should be concerned first of all about his own personal standing and the welfare of his own soul. That word comes exceedingly close: “They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept” (Song 1. 6). The analogy is very clear, very solemn. Here is a husbandman whose work is to look after a few vineyards, one of which is his own. But he is so concerned to make a good job of all these other vineyards that his own is neglected. It is right that a minister should be deeply concerned about the souls of his hearers. He must. But, “It is me, O Lord.” We must die personally. A minister may have been blessed to thousands, but in the great day he stands alone before his Maker.

George Whitefield, who was blessed above most in the success of his preaching, said that if God were to deal with him on the grounds of the best sermon he ever preached (and some of his sermons were blessed to hundreds), He would damn him. May we be delivered from that condemnation: "They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept."

"Take heed unto thyself." And then the minister's prayers. We preach, but do we pray? How much do we pray concerning our own souls? How much do we pray for the word to speak to our congregations? How much do we pray for the Holy Spirit's help in what to say? And how much do we pray for His blessing to rest on our preaching?

There may be two preachers. They seem similar in ability and follow the same line in their preaching; but with one the Word seems to be abundantly blessed, and with the other there seems to be little or no effect. O but if you could follow them into the secret place, you would see how one laboured in prayer for himself and his hearers, but what a difference with the other! They used to speak of an African village, where some of the natives were very much blessed by the Spirit of God. They lived in their little huts (where there was no privacy) so day by day they used to wander alone from their huts into the jungle to pour out their hearts to God. Soon, with their going backwards and forwards, they wore out a path for themselves into the jungle. People began to speak of it as "the prayer path," and noticed if "the prayer path" became overgrown. A saying developed, "Watch your prayer path!" Well, as ministers, may our "prayer path" be well-trodden.

"Take heed unto thyself." And then another thing – our spirit. The Apostle Paul closes two of his epistles with the words: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" (or, "thy spirit"). Most of the epistles end: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you," or, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." But to Philemon and to the Galatians it is "with (thy) your spirit." Don't we need a word like this? If our religion is real, "grace once received can ne'er be lost," but grace is not always "with our spirit." Sometimes it is a wrong spirit. Sometimes it is a partial spirit. Sometimes it is a prejudiced spirit. Sometimes it is a hard spirit. Sometimes it is a God-dishonouring spirit.

We need to make that word a prayer: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with *my* spirit." We do need grace. It is a wonderful thing that the word is recorded: "He giveth more grace." We need that grace to give us a tender spirit in the fear of God, a spirit constrained by the love of Christ, a spirit that seeks the honour and glory of God, a spirit that desires that in all things the Lord Jesus might have the preeminence.

So, "Take heed unto thyself." And *then* "unto the doctrine" – that is, the doctrine believed in, the doctrine contended for, the doctrine preached.

You see, a true gospel minister is kept faithful to the doctrine of truth. We live in a sad day when people do not like doctrine; they talk about “dry doctrine.” But Luther said, “Doctrine is heaven.”

“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine” – the doctrine of free and sovereign grace in all its fulness; setting out man’s lost, ruined, guilty state by nature, and then tracing out the eternal covenant; the love of God to His people; the Saviour’s coming, His finished work, a definite redemption for His people, His life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, glorification; the Holy Spirit’s work; the vital necessity of effectual calling; the building up, establishing, everlasting safety and eternal security of the people of God.

There must be no compromising, no turning aside. We firmly believe:

“No news can suit a ruined race,
But sovereign, free, eternal grace;
No other gospel can impart
Life, peace and pardon to the heart.”

“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine.” Especially the doctrine of Christ and Him crucified in all its suitability to meet the need of a guilty sinner. The doctrine of Christ, who He is, the Son of God from all eternity, but a real Man by His mysterious incarnation. “Man to suffer, God to save.” The necessity of the atonement; the preciousness of the blood that cleanseth from all sin. Do we not read: “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, My speech shall distil as the dew” – that is the doctrine of Christ and Him crucified when sweetly applied by the Holy Ghost?

So, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine,” and “may Christ be first, and Christ be last, and Christ be All in all.” This is the preaching God has promised to bless. His Word declares: “And I, if I be lifted up ... will draw all men unto Me.” It must be Jesus first and last in every sermon.

Years ago a very popular young minister preached a very able sermon. Afterwards, as the people gathered together outside, they spoke of it with admiration. Except one godly old woman who was silent. “Didn’t you think it was a wonderful sermon?” they asked her, and were surprised when she said no. “Why, what was wrong?” The reply was: “There wasn’t much about the Lord Jesus in it.” “But He wasn’t in the text!” she was told. After a moment’s thought, she replied, “I think I would have managed to bring Him in!” The best sermons are those that are full of Christ.

“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine.” There is another thing about “the doctrine.” In the first chapter of this epistle there is so much about sin, evil, wickedness, walking wrongly, disobeying the Lord

(1 Tim 1. 9, 10). At the end the apostle adds, “And if there be any other thing that is contrary to *sound doctrine*.” At first, it reads strangely; you would think it would read “contrary to Christian practice,” or “contrary to godly living.” But it does not. “Contrary to sound doctrine.” That is, *sinful behaviour is contrary to sound doctrine*.

So, if words mean anything at all, this means that sound doctrine is not just in the Bible or in the preaching; it affects the life of the believer. Which means that the minister, in taking heed to sound doctrine, must contend for its practical effect in the believer’s life – what Bunyan called “the practic part.”

Some congregations do not like it when the minister reproves them from the pulpit. Much less do they like it when he faithfully reproves them personally. There will be times when a faithful pastor will come to you and say, “It would be nice if you didn’t do that,” and it is good when the people in love can receive it.

“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine” So, the doctrines of free and sovereign grace, especially the doctrine of Christ and Him crucified, and not forgetting the doctrine of the godly walk of believers. “I ... beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” Paul devoted a great part of his epistles to the doctrine of practical godliness.

“Continue in them.” It is one thing to begin; it is another thing to continue. There is only one way a gospel minister can continue, and Paul makes it exceedingly plain: “Having therefore obtained help of God,” and only as having obtained help of God, “I continue unto this day.” What a mercy that there is promised “grace to help in time of need”!

“For in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.” At first this sounds very strangely in our ears, doesn’t it? What does it mean? One thing is abundantly clear: however godly a minister is, however faithful he is, and however much he “takes heed,” that will not be the salvation of his soul.

“The holiest saint who yonder sings
Before God’s throne,
Is saved, like Mary Magdalene,
By blood alone.”

We take the word to mean this: if a minister is truly able to preach the doctrines of the everlasting gospel, and they are applied to his own heart, *there* is salvation. And if the Lord is pleased to bless his ministry, and apply it with power to the hearts of his hearers, *that* is salvation. “In doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”

We believe it also means this: “In doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” from a lot of sadness, a lot of chastisement, a lot of confusion, a lot of trouble.

Well, these are solemn exhortations to a minister of the gospel.

“Take heed unto thyself.” We hope none think these things just belong to the minister, and are no concern for the hearer. If there is a “take heed” here addressed to the preacher, there are many “take heeds” addressed to those who profess godliness and grace. The Lord Jesus often used this expression. So “suffer the word of exhortation.”

First of all, a congregation is commanded to take heed that it values the gift of the gospel ministry, especially the gift of a pastor. The Word of God is emphatic (and the Word of God does not use exaggerated language): “Esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake” (1 Thess. 5. 13). Sadly, many who are blessed with a faithful pastor never really value their privilege, while there are others who long for it and are never favoured with this gift from the Most High.

Another “take heed” is this. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief” (Heb. 3. 12). This word “take heed” is very solemn. It is as if someone were sounding an alarm. We need to listen.

Then, “Take heed therefore how ye hear” (Luke 8. 18). This word was spoken by the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, so if there is a solemn accountability put on a preacher, there is a solemn accountability put on his hearers. We shall be judged in the great day according to how we have heard the Word.

“Take heed” that you pray for the minister. Where there is a praying congregation, it is such a help to the preacher, and then it results in being a help to the congregation themselves.

Many years ago there was an aged pastor. In his early days his preaching had been singularly blessed, but in his latter years there seemed to be little effect. Some of the people approached him and complained of the lack of success in his preaching. His reply was: “I have lost my prayer book.” The people were mystified; in our chapels we do not have prayer books. Then he explained himself. “In my early days my congregation wrestled for me in prayer. In recent days a spirit of prayerlessness seems to have arisen. I have lost my prayer book.” The people fell under that rebuke, a spirit of prayer was given, and it is said that again there was blessing as in former days.

“Take heed” that you remember the preacher in prayer. He has many burdens, trials, disappointments and sorrows. Few hearers realise just how the minister feels on the Lord’s day morning – sometimes empty and barren; sometimes feeling unwell; sometimes wondering what to say. It is a wonderful experience for a minister to be borne up by the prayers of the people as “on eagles’ wings.”

We read of some that “the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Heb. 4. 2). Why did the

Word not profit? There was nothing wrong with the minister; there was nothing wrong with the sermon. What was wrong was the hearts of the hearers, plagued with unbelief. "Take heed how ye hear." "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Heb. 2. 1). The margin is: "run out as leaking vessels." You have seen a jug, full of water, but there is a crack in it; and a few minutes later it is empty. It has all run out. We do not want to be hearers like that.

So there is a very close "take heed" to the hearer as well as the preacher. And not least, "take heed" how you walk. The Apostle John on one occasion wrote, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." You see, there are people in the congregation, and over the years they are blessed with a relationship to their pastor as children to a father. Now pastors cannot help hearing things! But what a joy to hear that the congregation are walking in truth. There is no greater delight for a minister than to hear of his hearers walking tenderly, graciously, as constrained by the love of Christ. But a minister has no greater sorrow than to hear that his children do *not* walk in truth. No greater sorrow for a pastor than to hear that this one and that one, who have openly professed the Lord's name, have now become careless, carnal, and have turned aside from Zion's ways.

"Take heed." O "take heed" concerning your walk. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us."

So never forget: the "take heed" belongs to the hearer as well as the preacher.

That is not the end. There is another thing. Here is a solemn exhortation, a solemn warning – to preacher and people. Here is a high standard, yet "we would not have it less." But how can we in any measure walk it out? That is the great question.

There is only one answer – that wonderful fulness of love, mercy, wisdom and grace in the Lord Jesus. "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." Here is complete provision for our needs.

The Apostle Paul himself exclaims, "Who is sufficient for these things?" and then answers his own question: "Our sufficiency is of God." Whatever a minister needs, whatever a hearer needs, is to be found in Christ. Empty, weak, unworthy, sinful we are, but there is that all-sufficiency in the Person of a once-crucified, now risen, exalted Saviour.

A minister, like any child of God, would like to have a stock in hand. There is that difficulty next week; we fear the unknown way; there is that trial; we have many fears. If only we had a stock of grace in hand! But the Lord will keep us completely dependent. There is a wonderful fulness in Christ, complete provision; but it is given "when we come

there.” It is like the manna; we cannot have tomorrow’s supply today. It is “as thy days, so shall thy strength be.” It is like the widow woman’s barrel of meal and cruse of oil. How nice to see the cruse overflowing and the barrel full to the top! But Elijah and the widow woman had to live a life of dependence, but when they came, there was always a handful of meal at the bottom of the barrel, and a little oil in the cruse.

So it must ever be with us. “Take heed.” This is the secret for preacher and hearer: “All my springs are in Thee” – all of them. Everything I need: the wisdom, the strength, the help, the grace; everything in providence, everything spiritually. For the preacher, he finds there is a living spring in a gospel pulpit that never fails.

A little story was told of one of Queen Victoria’s ambassadors. At short notice he was commanded to go to a far-off country. He was sad, and objected. He had a wife, children, difficulties, responsibilities at home. Queen Victoria’s quiet answer was: “You see to my concerns, and I will take care of your concerns.”

In a much higher sense that is true of us, with all our weakness and fears: “Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.”

So, “Take heed to thyself, and unto the doctrine” – the high standard, the seemingly impossible standard, for preacher and hearer; but then the wonderful provision there is in Christ.

This article is based on the sermon preached on May 28th, 2004, at Choteau, Montana, U.S.A., at the recognition service of Mr. M.T. Pickett as pastor.

ALL THINGS WORKING FOR GOOD

Sermon preached by J.E. Hazelton at Streatley Hall, London, on April 13th, 1924 (probably the last Lord’s day he preached before his death).

Text: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8. 28).

The law is all condemnation; the gospel is all consolation. At Sinai there are thunderings and darkness, tempest and woe. No wells of water are there, no hope for a sinner is to be found there. But when we come to the gospel, all is joy, peace and salvation.

In this chapter we have in all its fulness the glorious gospel of the blessed God. It sets forth the position of every dear believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The privileges, the possessions and salvation that are declared here are not the portion of one class of believers; they are equally the possession of them all. But we freely admit, there are great

differences in the degrees of faith which believers possess, and consequently in their apprehension of these divine realities, which make glad the souls of home-going pilgrims. The veriest babe in grace who is here this morning in the family of God inherits all his Father's fulness as declared in this chapter, just as the youngest member of a family on earth is equally interested in the love and provision of the father of that family.

Hence we are right in saying that this chapter is full of consolation and full of comfort (what a blessed word that is in this comfortless world!) first against the condemning sentence of the law. It is full of comfort against indwelling sin, that will adhere to every justified and sanctified sinner to the very end of the journey; full of comfort and consolation against all afflictions, all crosses, all tribulation, all charges of conscience, all challenges of Satan, all attractions of the world, consolation against them all.

Let us briefly look this morning, first of all, at *the declaration*: "We know that all things work together for good." Secondly and lastly, *those to whom this declaration is made*: "Those who love God, and are the called according to His purpose." I know that I must have preached from this text several times in the course of my poor ministry, but I have not the least idea what I said on those occasions. The words have come to me again, and I freely bring them to you this morning. I feel increasingly that it is an inworking of pride on the part of a minister when he says, "I must not take this text again; I have already preached from it."

Now I have termed the first part of the text *a declaration* because it is not a promise; it is a declaration of present, eternal fact. It is not simply a statement of what God will do, but of what He has always done, and what He is doing now, and will continue to do to the end.

Here we are gathered together this morning, for the most part, I would fain hope and pray, a little band of those whose hearts God has touched, Christian men and women, feeling in the course of the Christian life how much there is against us in our own corrupt hearts, how much in the world, and how powerful are the assaults of the adversary; feeling more and more the power of the spirit of the age and the environment by which we are surrounded, and sometimes saying, "Everything today seems against us in connection with the things of God." But it is not so; God says, "All things work together for good."

Now first of all, let us consider some of these glorious, immutable realities that work together for our good, and then we will turn to the other side of the declaration.

God Himself, who is the chief good, is *for* the least and the feeblest of His people. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" It is a most wonderful thing to believe in God. It is a wonderful thing to say, "I believe in the Lord God Almighty." David Hume, the great historian,

was a noted infidel. A child was introduced by her father to him. She was only a very little girl, and she would not look at him or speak to him. "What have I done, my little girl, that you will not come to me?" he said. "Mr. Hume, you do not believe God." And then she fell down on her knees and said, "O God, show Thyself to Mr. Hume!" And it touched the man deeply.

First of all, God Himself, who is the chief good, is on the side of His people. His wisdom, His power, His justice, His holiness, every wondrous attribute that almighty, eternal God possesses is for every worm Jacob. "All things work together for good." "I am God, all-sufficient," said the Lord to Abraham, "walk before Me, and be thou perfect." "My grace is sufficient for thee," said He to Paul, referring to his thorn in the flesh. God who created the earth and the entire universe, the proportions of which we can in no wise estimate, God who made heaven, is *for* His people. The most precious thing God has on the face of this earth is His beloved church; nothing else is so precious in His sight. There was one Being even yet more precious, who once sojourned on this globe, and that was His own beloved Son, He who stood in union with His church.

All His works are on behalf of His church, and all His words. The law with all its condemnation is yet an instrument for the good of His people. His gospel, His promises, all the doctrines of the faith which are given to us for our instruction, all the thoughts and purposes of Almighty God, are for His people. Hence He says by Jeremiah, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you ... thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Next, the Lord Jesus Christ is for us. He worketh together with the Father for good to them that love God. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." O consider, dear friends, the work of our most blessed Redeemer. Consider the work that He did in eternity, when we had no personal existence. He undertook our cause, assuming the responsibilities which, as God's creatures, we should be called upon to discharge. As Head of the church, He promised to bring all the given ones unto His eternal glory. I love to meditate upon the blessed truth that my name, your names, were before our Saviour even before we had any personal existence, that He looked at us in the glass of His own foreknowledge, and that He spoke with His Father, and undertook with His Father to save us with an everlasting salvation. I thank God that my salvation was not an afterthought of the Lord – *eternal* love, *eternal* undertaking, *eternal* settlement.

Not only all He did in eternity, but all He did in time, "all things work together for good." His incarnation, His life of thirty-three years upon earth, His teaching, His sin-bearing, His blood-shedding, His

perfecting of His work in righteousness, this precious legacy of love and mercy which He has bequeathed to His people, His temptation, His agony in Gethsemane, His laying down His life upon the cross, all work together for our eternal good.

“View Him now in heaven sitting,
Interceding for us there;
Not a moment intermitting
His compassion and His care.”

His precious blood which shall never lose its power, His justifying righteousness, the offices He bears as Prophet, Priest and King, are all *for* the least and feeblest of His people; all for every poor sinner here this morning who from his heart prays, “God be merciful to me a sinner”; all for those who with hoar hairs realise that underneath them are the everlasting arms, and that He who hath made them and manifested them as His people will bear and carry them even unto the end. God for us; Jesus Christ, His own eternal Son, for us.

What else? The Holy Spirit for us. In other words, God in His Trinity of Persons, working together for good to them that love Him. How beautiful is the word, “*work together.*” Where the Father’s eternal love is, there is the Son’s salvation; where the Son’s salvation is, there is the Spirit’s inditing, teaching, revealing and helping. The words are distinct, but the works are united. You cannot have a drop of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, you cannot have one vibration of the finger of His grace, without being well assured on the ground of our text, that all things, the work of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, are being carried on for good. I do long for myself and for you that we may realise more of the power of God the Holy Ghost; as we do so we shall pray aright, for He always maketh intercession according to the will of God. “O God the Holy Ghost, direct my prayers, be Thou my inward Instructor, so that I may ask for those things which are according to the will of my heavenly Father, and to the divine purpose and redemption of Jesus Christ the Lord.”

“All things work together for good to them that love God,” that is, all the mercies of God spiritually and temporally. And where are these mercies of God contained and set forth? In the everlasting covenant there are good things, a full supply there, in the covenant that is ordered in all things and sure. Salvation is there. “This is all my salvation, and all my desire.” Perseverance is there. All divine providences are there; no contingency can in any way arise from the covenant purposes of our God. What is declared concerning Him with regard to His people in 2 Chronicles 16. 9? It is said of our God, His eyes “run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong” on their behalf, that

is on behalf of His people. Now here are positive works of kindness and grace and mercy that are for the good of them that love God.

Now let us turn to the other side of the declaration. All evil things shall work together for good as well as all good things. O there is divine assurance here, strong consolation to those who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them. Sin – can anyone assert that sin is among the all things that work together for good? Indeed we can, as we look upon and know the power of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Sin is the evil of all evils. It works death and condemnation. But how does it work for good together with all things? The righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ infinitely excels the righteousness of the first Adam. The joys of salvation are infinitely expansive. Adam's was but the brief-lived age of innocence. Union with Christ springs from His putting away all sin.

“Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress.”

If it had not been for sin, should we ever have known salvation? If it had not been by the disobedience of one, should we ever have known the sweetness and power that comes through the imputed obedience of Another? “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.” It works for good to us that hate it, and that love God. This is one of the reasons why (it seems to me) the Holy Ghost so frames this verse: “good to them that love God”; and if you have a little love to God, you hate sin. Yet out of sin springs this eternal good thing.

“All things work together for good to them that love God” – all the temptations of Satan, all the trials of life. If God's grace is in your heart, you will know and feel more and more of the power of temptation, and you will feel more and more keenly the thorns of trial. Why is Satan permitted to tempt? Peter says, “If need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations”; there is a needs be for the temptations of Satan, and for the trials that beset us by the way. The Lord takes these temptations and trials and uses them for our good. Dear friends, let us remember that in all the problems of life, infinite wisdom holds the scales of providence, and that we shall not be called upon to bear one iota more than God gives us grace to sustain.

Now let us pass next, and very briefly, to enquire what is that good which is spoken of here. They “work together for good.” It does not mean temporal good and prosperity, though it is no small mercy when the Lord is pleased to vouchsafe His favours in this direction. Nor does it mean that God's people will be free from losses and crosses in this world, that they will be able to sit down in ease and comfort in their own homes. The good that God has in view is the good which He purposes,

whose thoughts are infinitely higher than our thoughts, even as the heavens are higher than the earth. If it be not temporal good, what is that good which is the purpose of our God in causing all these things to work together? This – the increasing of our knowledge of and acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ. Anything and everything that brings me consciously and experimentally nearer to the Lord Jesus Christ is for my good. Anything and everything that weans me from the world, that puts the world in its right perspective, is for good. “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” Everything that brings me to communion with God in Christ, to sacred fellowship with Him, to the knowledge of the love of Christ, all this is for good.

Some of the wheels of a watch move with a direct motion, others with a retrograde motion, but the result is that the hands point to the hour. So with regard to the “all things,” some seem to move in a retrograde way, others in a direct way, but sanctified by the God of all grace they point us, they draw us, to “the Chiefest among ten thousand” and “the Altogether Lovely.”

“Them that *love God* ... them who are *the called according to His purpose*.” The spring of everything is the love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost. We are called because He has loved us from all eternity. Love to God moves those who are described here to rely upon, to depend upon, to put all things into His hands. He forgiveth all our iniquities and healeth all our diseases. Let us put our diseases into His hand, our sin and guilt, our corruptness. We have a warrant so to do from His own Word. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” God who has called us creates love in our hearts, and His love draws our souls upwards and onwards to Him. It is the special purpose of our God to give diligence, doubting one, fearing one, to make your calling and election sure. Make your calling sure first, and thus your election will most surely be proved to your own soul. You are called from the world, called to the Lord Jesus Christ, called to place implicit trust in Him whose wonder-working hand is displayed for us in this text.

So shall an entrance be ministered unto you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We have strong consolation, dear friends. Let us seek for grace to look off ourselves unto Him who is the Author and Finisher of our faith, and implicitly to depend upon this word, so great, so precious and so true, which is recorded in our text this morning. Amen.

Apart from his sermons, John E. Hazelton was known as an author – *Holdfast: A Sketch of Covenant Truth and Its Witnesses*, and *Inasmuch*, a history of the Aged Pilgrims’ Friend Society, of which he was Secretary for many years.

SOVEREIGN GRACE

By Abraham Booth (1734-1806)

Grace in our text (Rom. 5. 21) is compared to a sovereign. Now a sovereign, considered as such, is invested with regal power and the highest authority. Grace, therefore, in her beneficent government, must exert and manifest sovereign power – must supersede the reign, and counteract the mighty and destructive operations of sin, or she cannot bring the sinner to eternal life. For the Holy Spirit has compared sin to a sovereign, whose reign terminates in death.

As *sin* appears, clothed in horrid deformity and armed with destructive power, inflicting temporal death and menacing eternal flames, so *grace* appears on the throne, arrayed in the beauties of holiness and smiling with divine benevolence; touched with feelings of the tenderest compassion and armed with all the magnificence of invincible power. Fully determined to exert her authority and gratify her compassion, under the conduct of infinite wisdom, to the everlasting honour of inflexible justice, inviolable veracity and every divine perfection, by rescuing the condemned offender from the jaws of destruction; by speaking peace to the alarmed consciences of damnable delinquents; by restoring to apostate creatures and vile miscreants a supreme love to God and delight in the ways of holiness; and finally, by bringing them safe to everlasting honour and joy. In a word, the heart of this mighty sovereign is compassion itself: her looks are love; her language is balm to the bleeding soul, and her arm salvation. Such a sovereign is grace. Those who are delivered by her must enjoy a complete salvation. Those who live under her most benign government must be happy indeed.

Divine grace, as reigning in our salvation, not only appears, but appears with majesty; not only shines, but triumphs; providing all things, freely bestowing all things necessary to our eternal happiness. Grace does not set our salvation on foot by accommodating its terms and conditions to the enfeebled capacities of lapsed creatures, but begins, carries on and completes the arduous work. Grace, as a sovereign, does not rescue the sinner from deserved ruin, furnish him with new abilities, and then leave him, by their proper use, to resist the tempter, to mortify his lusts, to attain those holy qualities and perform those righteous acts which render him fit for eternal happiness and give him a title to it. No; for if the province and work of grace were circumscribed in this manner, things of the greatest importance to the glory of God and the felicity of man would be left in the most uncertain and perilous situation. And, admitting the possibility of any sinner being saved in such a way, there would be ample scope for the exertions of spiritual pride, and much room for boasting, which would be diametrically contrary to the honour of the

Most High, and frustrate the noble designs of grace. This matchless favour, far from being satisfied with laying the foundation, rears the superstructure also; it not only settles the preliminaries, but executes the very business itself. The Pharisee in the parable made his acknowledgments to preventing and assisting grace; for, "God, I thank Thee," was his language. It is evident, however, that his views of grace were very contracted, and his hopes arising from it very deceitful. Would we then view grace as reigning, we must consider it as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of our salvation; that the unrivalled honour of that greatest of all works may be given to "the God of all grace."

Having taken this general view of reigning grace, I would now ask, What think you, reader, of this wonderful favour? Is it worthy of God? Is it suitable to your case? Or know you not that you are by nature under the guilt and dominion of sin? Of sin, that dreadful sovereign; of sin, that worst of tyrants. Sin reigns, says the apostle, and the end of its reign, where the sovereignty of grace does not interpose, is eternal death. Can you sleep away your time and dream of being finally happy while under the power of so malignant a sovereign? Shall the toys and trifles of a transitory world amuse, when your soul, your immortal all, is at stake? If so, how lamentable your condition! how dreadful your state! May you acknowledge the supremacy of divine grace, submit to her government, before justice ascend the throne and vengeance launch her bolts.

Or, if awake in your conscience, do you think it possible to effect your own deliverance? Alas! you are entirely without strength to perform any such thing; and grace was never intended as an auxiliary to help the weak, but well-disposed, to save themselves. The mercy of God and the gospel of Christ were never designed to assist and reward the righteous, but to relieve the miserable and save the desperate – to deliver those who have no other assistance nor any other hope. Were you acquainted with your abject vassalage, were you convinced by the Spirit of truth that there is no possible way of escape but by reigning grace, then would you cry for help, and then the relief that grace affords would be all your salvation and all your desire.

If, on the other hand, you are burdened with sin and harassed by clamorous fears of being cast into hell; if, sensible of your native depravity, the multiplied iniquities of your life, the many shameful defects attending your best services, and your present absolute unworthiness, you are ready to sink in despondency, O remember, that grace has erected her throne! This forbids despair. For her wonderful throne is erected, not on the ruins of justice, not on the dishonour of the law, but on the *blood of the Lamb*.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

From An Exposition of the Parables by Benjamin Keach (1640-1704)

In seeking His lost sheep, divers things are comprehended which chiefly refer to that state and condition in which He finds them.

1. Christ, in seeking His lost sheep, leaves that glorious place where He was, namely, the glory He had with the Father. Our blessed Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, was with the Father considered as God from eternity, but to seek His lost sheep He came into this world; and indeed to seek His own elect, who were lost in the first Adam, was one main reason why He came hither. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19. 10). He must come where His lost sheep were, be it never so far a journey. A shepherd goes from the place where he was, in those parts where he hears his sheep are strayed, or lost in the wilderness; so the good Shepherd came into this world, where His sheep were all gone astray. "I came forth from the Father ... into the world: again I leave the world, and go to the Father" (John 16. 28).

2. To seek His lost sheep, He did not only come into this world, but He did also assume man's nature, and so became Man. This was a wonderful condescension: "Who being in the form of God" (Phil. 2. 6) – i.e., the second Person in the Trinity, God by nature, very God, existent with the Father, yea, the very express image and character of the Father's Person, which denotes a peculiar subsistence, distinct from the subsistence of the Father – "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," it being His right by eternal generation, He being co-essential the same God. He judged it not usurpation, He the second Person being a subsistent in the same divine nature and essence. "But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2. 7). Most willingly He took the nature of man into union with His divine Person out of love to His lost sheep; not that He "lost the form of God, or laid His Godhead aside"; no, that He could not do; but He veiled the glory of His Deity, in assuming our nature, not to seek and save fallen angels. "For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham" (Heb. 2. 16). He united not His Person to the angelical nature, to seek and save fallen angels; but He assumed into union with His divine Person the seed of Abraham, that is, the very nature of His elect, or His lost sheep, that He might be fitted or capacitated to accomplish the great work He came about to seek or recover them. For as He was God simply considered, He could not do this, nor simply considered as Man; it therefore behoved Him to be both God and Man in one Person. For there was a high and fiery mountain for Him to level which stood betwixt God and His lost sheep, over which it was impossible for Him to bring them home to God.

Perhaps you will ask what hill or fiery mountain was this?

I answer, the hill or mount of divine justice signified by Mount Sinai, this burning mount He must quench, or make smooth and even with divine love, goodness and mercy. My brethren, the law and justice of God was such a bar or mount of difficulty to the return of Christ's sheep, that unless Christ satisfies both, He could not bring one lost sheep over this high and soul-amazing mountain; and therefore He wrought out a righteousness for our justification that suited with the nature of God, His law and justice. For as Adam's sin or disobedience, I mean his first sin was imputed to all his seed, or it was by his disobedience, that "many were made sinners" (Rom. 5. 19); so it is by the obedience of Jesus Christ that all in Him are made righteous, His obedience being imputed to all them that He seeks, finds and brings home to God.

3. Jesus Christ to seek, recover, find and save His lost sheep laid down His life; for there was a dreadful lake into which His lost sheep were fallen, and out of which the great Shepherd must pluck them, or He could not seek them so as to save one soul. Now this lake was God's divine wrath, which in the Scripture is often compared to fire. Now this fire had taken hold of every lost and undone sinner; and this fire, or divine anger and burning wrath, the Lord Jesus must quench by bearing of it on His own body and human soul, and so deliver or draw His sheep out of it, or else He could not bring them unto God. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust" (1 Pet. 3. 18) to that end. "That He might bring us to God."

Observe it well, He could not bring us to God unless He suffered for our sins, or bore that wrath that was due to us for our sins in breaking the law of the first covenant. The active obedience of Jesus Christ was not sufficient alone to justify sinners, because we had broken the holy law of God; and God being just (nay Justice itself) will have full satisfaction by us, or by our Surety, whom He had substituted in our room.

And pray note, that to make expiation for sin, there was a necessary concurrence of the two natures in our blessed Redeemer; He must be Man, for the Godhead was not capable of that submission and obedience which were necessary and requisite to expiate sin; and He must be Man, that the sinning nature might not only actually obey (or pay the debt of actual obedience which we owed to the law), but also bear the punishment or penalty due to us for our sins; and so thereby acquire a title to the satisfaction which is made. For the meritorious sufferings of Christ imputed to believers are grounded on the union of the two natures, which is (as one observes) as well natural, in His partaking of flesh and blood, as moral, in the consent of their will; as the apostle observes, "Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one" (Heb. 2. 11). So (saith he) He that offers must have communion in the same nature.

And as His human nature was necessary to qualify Him for His sufferings to bear God's wrath, so the divine nature was to make them sufficient; for the human nature considered in itself could not make satisfaction; but the dignity of the divine Person makes a temporal or short punishment to be of infinite worth and value in God's account. Besides, the human nature would have sunk under the weight of divine wrath, or have been itself consumed in those flames, had not the Deity been personally present, and in union personally considered with it, to support and uphold it. This the good Shepherd hath done in seeking and carrying home His lost sheep.

4. Jesus Christ, to seek and save His elect, or His lost sheep, rose again from the dead, by which God declared that He was well pleased, and fully satisfied by the payment His Son had made. The prisoner that was charged, carried to prison and shut up in the prison-house for three days and three nights, is now by the great Creditor, or rather Creator, released, discharged, justified and acquitted, and all His elect in Him, from all sins, debts, dues and demands whatsoever, both past, present and to come, due to divine justice. So that all that are brought home, i.e., who are united to Christ, are for ever freed from wrath and condemnation; and the same blessing is secured for all the elect who are not yet called (Rom. 8. 1).

My brethren, had not Christ been able to have raised Himself out of that fiery lake (into which His sheep were fallen) and into which He plunged, that fire had never been quenched; both sheep and Shepherd had perished together. But He being God as well as Man, it was impossible death or wrath could hold Him down; nor could God in justice keep Him in prison, seeing He had received a full satisfaction to His law and justice. This, my brethren, also we ought to know and consider well of, viz., that Christ in obeying of the law, or living a sinless and unspotted life, and in His dying and rising again, and in His ascension up to heaven, did all as our Head and blessed Substitute, Representative and Surety.

5. Jesus Christ, in seeking and recovering His lost sheep, must subdue and overcome all our spiritual enemies, who hath all God's elect under their feet. He therefore overcame the world in all its sinful snares, enticements, powers and temptations. "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16. 33). He overcame the world and the god of this world, death, sin and the grave (Heb. 2. 14, 15); so that He might bring His lost sheep to God, both in soul and body: for all these enemies stood in the way to obstruct their returning to God. He hath therefore triumphed over principalities and powers (Eph. 4. 8), and "led captivity captive" in His resurrection and in His glorious ascension into heaven.

6. Jesus Christ doth not only thus in His own Person seek and endeavour, in all these blessed transactions, the recovery of His lost

sheep, but He substitutes and appoints His servants or faithful ministers to search also to find them out, and cry aloud to them, and to reveal or make known what He hath done to make their peace with God, and so to discover the only way by which they must come to God. One way therefore by which He seeks them is by the preaching of the gospel; by this means externally He calls them and gathers home His elect. The sheep of Christ know not any other way, but by the revelation of the gospel, of the only way and means of their recovery or restoration: faith is required of such that are saved. “And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10. 14).

But though the preaching of the gospel is the external means Jesus Christ uses to seek and bring home His lost sheep, and which is the ordinary way He hath ordained to work faith in their souls by which they take hold of Him, yet it is not that will do of itself: for many are called who never are brought home. Therefore He, whilst they call by outward preaching, also such that are His own sheep calls by a more special and powerful voice, I mean, by the influences of His Holy Spirit upon their souls, which is called His voice. “My sheep hear My voice” (John 10. 27). Others hear it not, because they are not His sheep. Some only hear the voice of His ministers; they do not hear nor know the voice of Christ. Lydia being one of His sheep, the Lord opened her heart, that she attended on the word that Paul preached (Acts 16. 14). Christ’s voice is powerful; it enlightens the understanding and inclines and bows the will, and changes the affections; and thus Christ this way seeks His sheep, and by touching their hearts they believe and come to Him.

THE BIRTH OF SAMUEL

From “Bishop Hall’s Contemplations” by Joseph Hall (1574-1656)

HANNAH AND PENINNAH

Ill customs, where they are once entertained, are not easily discharged. Polygamy*, besides carnal delight, might now plead age and example, so even Elkanah, though a Levite, is tainted with the sin of Lamech – like as fashions of attire, which at the first were disliked as uncomely yet, when they are once grown common, are taken up of the gravest. Yet this sin, as then current with the time, could not make Elkanah not religious. The house of God in Shiloh was duly frequented of him; oftentimes alone, in his ordinary course of attendance with all his males thrice a year, and once a year with all his family. The continuance

* Polygamy, among the godly in the Old Testament, is one of the mysteries of the Word of God.

of an unknown sin cannot hinder the uprightness of a man's heart with God; as a man may have a mole upon his back, and yet think his skin clear. The least touch of knowledge or wilfulness mars his sincerity.

He that by virtue of his place was employed about the sacrifices of others would much less neglect his own. It is a shame for him that teaches God's people that they should not appear before the Lord empty, to bring no sacrifice for himself. If Levites be profane, who should be religious?

It was the fashion when they sacrificed to feast; so did Elkanah. The day of his devotion is the day of his triumph; he makes great cheer for his whole family, even for that wife which he loved less. There is nothing more comely than cheerfulness in the services of God. What is there in all the world, wherewith the heart of man should be so lift up, as with the conscience of his duty done to his Maker? While we do so, God doth to us, as our glass, smile upon us, while we smile on Him.

Love will be seen by entertainment. Peninnah and her children shall not complain of want, but Hannah shall find her husband's affection in her portion; as his love to her was double, so was her part. She fared not the worse because she was childless. No good husband will dislike his wife for a fault out of the power of her redress; yea rather, that which might seem to lose the love of her husband wins it, her barrenness. The good nature of Elkanah laboured by his dear respects to recompense this affliction, that so she might find no less contentment in the fruit of his hearty love than she had grief from her own fruitlessness. It is the property of true mercy to be most favourable to the weakest; thus doth the gracious Spouse of the Christian soul pity the barrenness of His servants. O Saviour, we should not find Thee so indulgent to us if we did not complain of our own unworthiness!

Peninnah may have the more children, but barren Hannah hath the most love. How much rather could Elkanah have wished Peninnah barren, and Hannah fruitful! But if she should have had both issue and love, she had been proud, and her rival despised. God knows how to disperse His favours so that every one may have cause both of thankfulness and humiliation; while there is no one that hath all, no one but hath some. If envy and contempt were not thus equally tempered, some would be over-haughty, and others too miserable; but now every man sees that in himself which is worthy of contempt, and matter of emulation in others; and, contrarily, sees what to pity and dislike in the most eminent, and what to applaud in himself; and out of this contrariety arises a sweet mean of contentation.

The love of Elkanah is so unable to free Hannah from the wrongs of her rival that it procures them rather. The unfruitfulness of Hannah had never with so much despite been laid in her dish if her husband's

heart had been as barren of love to her. Envy, though it take advantage of our weaknesses, yet is ever raised upon some grounds of happiness in them whom it emulates; it is ever an ill effect of a good cause. If Abel's sacrifice had not been accepted, and if the acceptation of his sacrifice had not been a blessing, no envy had followed upon it.

There is no evil of another wherein it is fit to rejoice but his envy, and this is worthy of our joy and thankfulness, because it shows us the price of that good which we had and valued not. The malignity of envy is thus well answered, when it is made the evil cause of a good effect to us, when God and our souls may gain by another's sin. I do not find that Hannah insulted upon Peninnah for the greater measure of her husband's love, as Peninnah did upon her for her fruitlessness. Those that are truly gracious know how to receive the blessings of God without contempt of them that want, and have learned to be thankful without pride.

Envy, when it is once conceived in a malicious heart, is like fire in billets of juniper which, they say, continues more years than one. Every year was Hannah thus vexed with her emulous [jealous; moved by a spirit of rivalry] partner, and troubled both in her prayers and meals. Amidst all their feasting, she fed on nothing but her tears. Some dispositions are less sensible and more careless of the despite and injuries of others, and can turn over unkind usages with contempt. By how much more tender the heart is, so much more deeply is it ever affected with discourtesies – as wax receives and retains that impression which in the hard clay cannot be seen; or, as the eye feels that mote which the skin of the eyelid could not complain of.

Yet the husband of Hannah, as one that knew his duty, labours by his love to comfort her against these discontentments: "Why weepst thou? Am not I better to thee than ten sons?" It is the weakness of good natures to give so much advantage to an enemy. What would malice rather have than the vexation of them whom it persecutes? We cannot better please an adversary than by hurting ourselves. This is no other than to humour envy, to serve the turn of those that malign us, and to draw on that malice whereof we are weary; whereas carelessness puts ill-will out of countenance and makes it withdraw itself in a rage, as that which doth but shame the author without the hurt of the patient. In causeless wrongs, the best remedy is contempt.

She that could not find comfort in the loving persuasions of her husband seeks it in her prayers. She rises up hungry from the feast, and hastens to the temple; there she pours out her tears and supplications. Whatsoever the complaint be, here is the remedy. There is one universal receipt [recipe] for all evils, prayer. When all helps fail us, this remains and, while we have an heart, comforts it.

Here was not more bitterness in the soul of Hannah than fervency; she did not only weep and pray, but vow unto God. If God will give her a son, she will give her son to God back again. Even nature itself had consecrated her son to God; for he could not but be born a Levite. But if his birth make him a Levite, her vow shall make him a Nazarite, and dedicate his minority to the tabernacle. The way to obtain any benefit is to devote it, in our hearts, to the glory of that God of whom we ask it. By this means shall God both pleasure His servant and honour Himself; whereas if the scope of our desires be carnal, we may be sure either to fail of our suit or of a blessing.

ELI AND HANNAH

Old Eli sits on a stool by one of the posts of the tabernacle. Where should the priests of God be but in the temple? Whether for action or for oversight, their very presence keeps God's house in order, and the presence of God keeps their hearts in order.

It is oft found that those which are themselves guilty are too forward to the censuring of others. Good Eli, because he marks the lips of Hannah to move without noise, chides her as drunken and uncharitably misconstrues her devotion. It was a weak ground whereon to build so heavy a sentence. If she had spoken too loud and wildly, he might have had some just colour for this conceit; but now, to accuse her silence, notwithstanding all her tears which he saw, of drunkenness, it was a zealous breach of charity.

Some spirits would have been enraged with so rash a censure. When anger meets with grief, both turn into fury. But this good woman had been inured to reproaches, and besides, did well see the reproof arose from misprision [misunderstanding], and the misprision from zeal; and therefore answers meekly, as one that had rather satisfy than expostulate, "Nay, my lord, but I am a woman troubled in spirit." Eli may now learn charity of Hannah. If she had been in that distemper whereof he accused her, his just reproof had not been so easily digested. Guiltiness is commonly clamorous and impatient, whereas innocence is silent and careless of misreports. It is natural unto all men to wipe off from their name all aspersions of evil, but none do it with such violence as they which are faulty. It is a sign the horse is galled, that stirs too much when he is touched.

She that was censured for drunken, censures drunkenness more deeply than her reprover: "Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial." The drunkard's style begins in lawlessness, proceeds in unprofitableness, ends in misery; and all shut up in the denomination of this pedigree, a son of Belial.

If Hannah had been tainted with this sin, she would have denied it with more fervour, and have disclaimed it with an extenuation: what if I should have been merry with wine? yet I might be devout. If I should have been overjoyed in my sacrifice to God, one cup of excess had not been so heinous. Now her freedom is seen in her severity [restraint]. Those which have clear hearts from any sin, prosecute it with rigour, whereas the guilty are ever partial. Their conscience holds their hands, and tells them that they beat themselves while they punish others.

Now Eli sees his error and recants it; and to make amends for his rash censure, prays for her. Even the best may err, but not persist in it. When good natures have offended, they are unquiet till they have hastened satisfaction. This was within his office, to pray for the distressed; wherefore serves the priest, but to sacrifice for the people? And the best sacrifices are the prayers of faith.

She that began her prayers with fasting and heaviness rises up from them with cheerfulness. It cannot be spoken how much ease and joy the heart of man finds in having unloaded his cares and poured out his supplications into the ears of God, since it is well assured that the suit which is faithfully asked is already granted in heaven. The conscience may well rest, when it tells us that we have neglected no means of redressing our affliction; for then it may resolve to look either for amendment or patience.

The sacrifice is ended, and now Elkanah and his family rise up early to return unto Ramah; but they dare not set forward till they have worshipped before the Lord. That journey cannot hope to prosper that takes no God with it. The way to receive blessings at home is to be devout at the temple.

She that before conceived faith in her heart now conceives a son in her womb. God will rather work miracles than faithful prayers shall return empty. I do not find that Peninnah asked any son of God, yet she had store; Hannah begged hard for this one, and could not till now obtain him. They which are dearest to God do oftentimes, with great difficulty, work out those blessings which fall into the mouths of the careless. That wise Disposer of all things knows it fit to hold us short of those favours which we sue for; whether for the trial of our patience, or the exercise of our faith, or the increase of our importunity, or the doubling of our obligation.

Those children are most like to prove blessings, which the parents have begged of God, and which are no less the fruit of our supplications than of our body. As this child was the son of his mother's prayers and was consecrated to God ere his possibility of being, so now himself shall know both how he came and whereto he was ordained; and, lest he should forget it, his very name shall teach him both: "She ... called his

name Samuel.” He cannot so much as hear himself named, but he must needs remember both the extraordinary mercy of God in giving him to a barren mother and the vow of his mother in restoring him back to God by her zealous dedication; and by both of them learn holiness and obedience. There is no necessity of significant names; but we cannot have too many monitors to put us in mind of our duty.

It is wont to be the father’s privilege to name his child; but because this was his mother’s son, begotten more by her prayers than the seed of Elkanah, it was but reason that she should have the chief hand both in his name and disposing. It had been indeed in the power of Elkanah to have changed both his name and profession, and abrogate the vow of his wife; that wives might know they were not their own, and that the rib might learn to know the head; but husbands shall abuse their authority if they shall wilfully cross the holy purposes and religious endeavours of their yoke-fellows. How much more fit is it for them to cherish all good desires in the weaker vessels and, as we use, when we carry a small light in a wind, to hide it with our lap or hand, that it may not go out. If the wife be a vine, the husband should be an elm, to uphold her in all worthy enterprises, else she falls to the ground and proves fruitless.

The year is now come about; and Elkanah calls his family to their holy journey, to go up to Jerusalem for the anniversary solemnity of their sacrifice. Hannah’s heart is with them, but she hath a good excuse to stay at home – the charge of her Samuel. Her success in the temple keeps her happily from the temple, that her devotion may be doubled, because it was respited. God knows how to dispense with necessities; but if we suffer idle and needless occasions to hold us from the tabernacle of God, our hearts are but hollow to religion.

Now at last, when the child was weaned from her hand, she goes up and pays her vow, and with it pays the interest of her intermission. Never did Hannah go up with so glad a heart to Shiloh as now that she carries God this reasonable present which Himself gave to her and she vowed to Him; accompanied with the bounty of other sacrifices, more in number and measure than the law of God required of her. And all this is too little for her God, that so mercifully remembered her affliction and miraculously remedied it. Those hearts which are truly thankful do no less rejoice in repayment than in their receipt; and do as much study how to show their humble and fervent affections for what they have, as how to compass favours when they want them; their debt is their burden which, when they have discharged, they are at ease.

If Hannah had repented of her vow and not presented her son to the tabernacle, Eli could not have challenged him [her?]. He had only seen her lips stir, not hearing the promise of her heart. It was enough that her

own soul knew her vow, and God, which was greater than it. The obligation of a secret vow is no less than if it had ten thousand witnesses.

Old Eli could not choose but much rejoice to see this fruit of those lips which he thought moved with wine; and this good proof, both of the merciful audience of God, and the thankful fidelity of his handmaid. This sight calls him down to his knees: "He worshipped the Lord." We are unprofitable witnesses of the mercies of God and the graces of men if we do not glorify Him for others' sakes, no less than for our own.

Eli and Hannah grew now better acquainted; neither had he so much cause to praise God for her as she afterwards for him; for if her own prayers obtained her first child, his blessings enriched her with five more. If she had not given her first son to God ere she had him, I doubt whether she had not been ever barren; or, if she had kept her Samuel at home, whether ever she had conceived again. Now that piety which stripped her of her only child for the service of her God hath multiplied the fruit of her womb, and gave her five for that one, which was still no less hers because he was God's. There is no so certain way of increase as to lend or give unto the Owner of all things.

THROUGH MANY DANGERS

*The autobiography of Isaac Lewis (1823-1896), for over
twenty years pastor at Staplehurst, Kent.*

I was born in the parish of Burnham, in the county of Essex, August 13th, 1823. I was born of gracious parents. My mother died when I was about eight years old, and I was then left to the care of my sister, who was married and kept my father's house.

My father tried hard to make me a scholar, but all to no purpose, for I hated school and those who wished me to go. O how often have I reflected upon the past respecting my dear father and myself! But so it was, and it cannot be altered. He was a kind, loving father, and a good and gracious man. He was not perfect! He had his faults and failings here.

The first thing I shall speak of is the smallpox, which I had when quite young. It was before my mother's death. I had it very bad. I was blind for some time, and my life hung in doubt; but not so with my God, for He had appointed the means for my recovery, as well as the end of the disease. This, with all God's dealings with me, has been for my good and God's glory. How true the words of the poet:

"Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of love sees fit."

I recovered, and grew up like a wild ass's colt, hardened to everything that was good and greedily running into everything that was bad. So addicted was I to all manner of evil and my conscience was so hardened that I had no thoughts of God. I do not remember in all my unregenerated state once calling upon God, even in the form of prayer. I was twice preserved by the hand of God from a watery grave. O, "How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

I will pass over many things that occurred in the days of my boyhood, and come to the time of leaving my father's house.

Three others and myself agreed to run away from home. The time fixed was one Sunday evening. Each of us had to muster what money we could. I went to my father with a lie and obtained a sum of money. At the time appointed we started off. We travelled part of that night till we came to a field of hay, where we rested for a time. Here I would remark that I intended giving my comrades the slip, but it was otherwise ordered; for when I thought of starting, I found to my surprise that my leg was fastened to another boy's leg. He awoke, and charged me with trying to run away, which I denied with a lie; so I was bound to go with them according to our agreement. We started for the nearest seaport, and arrived early the next morning and, as soon as we could, entered on board a man-of-war. When I was on board that ship, what a scene opened to my view! Here was sin in all its various forms – one continual peal of oaths and curses assailed my ear from day to day. This, with hard fare and a strict martial law to serve under for three or four years, and no kind word from a loving father, made me have bitter reflections upon myself. But here I was, and here I must be.

I proceeded on my voyage; nothing particular occurred. I was mercifully preserved and brought back to my native country; and then began my wild career. As soon as I was paid off and had my liberty, I gave full vent to the evil propensity of my youthful nature. O what depths of sin I was left to go into and what rebellion against the Most High! I was truly a willing slave to sin, Satan and my heart's lust. The predominant sins of my youth were lying, swearing and Sabbath breaking. I became the leader of a party of young men who were following in the same downward course; yet in the midst of all this wickedness, I was marked by God. The arrow of conviction, in due time, according to the purpose of the everlasting Three, which was purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began, was to be sent into my soul.

The time came for my father to be taken away by death; and I was glad for him to die. I speak it to my shame, because I had then no check, but could serve sin without any control. I verily believe I was one of the easiest fools Satan ever had; he would at times stir up my poor, fallen nature to curse and swear in such a fearful manner as to shock not only

the moral but the profane. I have often thought of the Lord using the mouth of the dumb ass to rebuke the madness of the prophet; and He also made use of the mouth of a poor, dead sinner to rebuke me, His poor, mad Gadarene, which fell heavily upon my spirits, to think that one who came from the lowest ranks of society should rebuke me. Even this had no good effect upon me; it only tended to harden rather than soften.

I must relate one remarkable instance of God's care over me when in a state of drunkenness. I went a short distance from home to see some relations, and on my way home I called at a public house to have something to drink. I had some rum, and I drank to such an excess that when I came out of the house I could scarcely stand, and at last fell on the road some little distance from the town. I managed to get up and stagger a little further, where was a ditch with a little water in it, and into this I fell, unconscious of where I was or the state I was in. Who could have kept me, and preserved me from death by drowning, but that God who holds the waters in the hollow of His hands, and the life of every living thing?

How shall I contemplate or speak of the love, mercy and grace of the everlasting Three who preserved me when dead to every mercy – to that God who preserved me, and sent a deliverer to rescue me? A man with a donkey and cart came by, and seeing something white in the hedge, for it was then dark, he came to me, and tried to lift me out of the ditch, but failed in the attempt. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved me when I was dead in sins, sent two more men to deliver me from my perilous condition. They helped the man to lift me into the cart, and I was taken to my father's house. This was before his death. I was as insensible as a block of wood to life and feeling. O how contrary it was with my dear father; for he, with all the emotions of a father's affection and a sense of the love of God in his heart, adopted the language of David: "O my son, my son, my son Isaac! O that God would stop thee in thy mad career and downward course to hell!" Not all his prayers, tears or kind words could avail anything with me.

Well do I know that there is a set time to favour Zion; and till that time arrives, let a man be what he may, peasant or prince, he can know nothing about the new birth or the work of regeneration; for the lip of infallible truth has said, "Ye must be born again"; which is contrary to the work of man. Man has nothing to do with communicating this life or maintaining this life in the soul; this is the work of the Holy Ghost. It is He alone who can convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come.

I must now say a word or two respecting my father, who was taken away when I was dead in sin and wickedness. He was not without a

hope that, sooner or later, God would quicken my soul into life, which I have one or two reasons for asserting. One is, I have been informed that when supplicating the God of heaven in public, he hardly ever omitted these words, "As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes and hearts are up unto Thee, O Lord, that there might be a seed to serve Thee, when time with me shall be no longer." I believe this was the prayer of faith in my father's heart, although it was not answered till after his death; and whilst writing this, I have a sweet assurance in my heart that the prayers and the things prayed for were, and are, according to the will of the everlasting Three.

It was some time after my father's death before the Lord implanted divine life in my soul and put me amongst the living children of His kingdom. I trust that I now stand classed with the good seed, because of the good work of grace wrought in my soul by God the Holy Ghost, and that I am amongst that seed who desire to serve the Lord in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter, but from a pure motive of love to honour His great and holy name and to debase the creature. But of this I shall speak more fully presently.

I must here give a brief account of my marriage. When I was about twenty-two I became acquainted with a young woman who is now my wife. I was determined to marry. I thought nothing about housekeeping; and after I had paid for my wedding dinner, I had only one half-crown left, no furniture, not even for one room; so we went into lodgings. One day my wife said to me, "This won't do; we must have a home of our own." So we hired a house; but we had only my wife's box and my chest to put into it.

In the course of time, however, with great economy we got a comfortable home, and then my wife said she should like to go to church; but I said I would not go. My wife went to church, but I stayed at home and went to bed, and was angry with her for going. At last she prevailed upon me to go with her. We went for a few Sundays; when I thought I was becoming quite good, and that this was all the goodness God required. My wife, not being satisfied with this, said, "I should like to go to chapel." I asked, "Which chapel?" She said, "I should like to go to your father's chapel." It was called his because he rented it for a long time.

I went for some time with no more feeling than a stone until, one Lord's day evening, the minister was speaking of sin, righteousness and judgment to come, when the Holy Ghost accompanied the word with power to my heart. The Lord says, "Is not My word as ... a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" My soul felt the shock and fell under its force. The law entered with its condemning power. The law demanded

satisfaction. I had not one mite wherewith to pay. I was arraigned at the bar of equity and truth in the court of conscience and God, my righteous Judge, appeared arrayed in dreadful majesty against me. The Holy Spirit brought indictments against me. The first was, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them"; and, "He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all."

The state of horror that then seized my soul I can never tell to the full. Truly the cup of bitters was given to drink to the full. I was, as the psalmist says, reeling to and fro like a drunken man. I was brought to my wits' end and knew not what to do. I cried, I begged for mercy, if there could be mercy for such a wretch as I felt myself to be.

The time of mercy was not yet come. I had to feel the burden of my sins and the anger of God against them in the law. I was shut up under the law, till at last faith was given me; but not the faith of assurance, but that which enabled me to have a hope in the mercy of God. Whilst under the law and the sentence of death in my soul, I thought the devil would come and take me away, body and soul.

One evening I well remember, when I was ill in body, the Holy Ghost opened up to me a little of the holiness and spirituality of the law and my state as a poor, condemned sinner. I was led to cry for mercy; but instead of getting an answer, I was made to feel the awful evils of my heart, and the powers of hell did indeed assault my soul in every part. The devil suggested to me, "Thou art one of those whom God abhors"; which was like pouring vitriol into a wound. I was upon my bed, under the dreadful feeling of sinking into hell every moment. I groaned in spirit; words failed me. The dear apostle knew what this groaning was when he wrote to the church at Rome: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now ... for we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

The little secret hope I had supported my soul: sure I am if I had been deprived of this hope I should have fallen into black and awful despair. Judas and Ahithophel never had this hope. I had no word brought to my soul to comfort me under this heavy storm. I had nothing but the surges of a guilty conscience in my feelings, a broken law open to my view, and the sword of divine justice hanging over my head. All that I had at this time was a desire; and the desire of the righteous shall be granted. I feel sure that where there is a righteous desire, God will hear, answer and satisfy that desire, as you will find He did for poor, unworthy me. I did desire that the great Lord would ease me of my burden a little; and the same hand that put it on took it off.

I fell into a doze for a short time; and when I awoke I thought and said too, "What a mercy I am out of hell!" Some people will say there is no hope under the law – that if there is, the damned in hell may have hope. Those who speak in this way know nothing of hell, the state of the damned, or the hope of the righteous. If they did, they would tell a different tale, and the apostle must be a false witness. Let God be true, and every man a liar who says contrariwise, for the lip of eternal truth, speaking by the psalmist, has said: "Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him." And again, "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." When a true desire is given, it is a tree of life. The desire of the righteous shall be granted, but the hope of the hypocrite shall perish. There is a dead hope as well as a living one; a dead desire as well as a living one. We are told, "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again," and, "through the scent of water it will bud." Just such a poor wretch was I. When cut down with the axe of God's eternal truth, I thought I must go to hell; but instead of this, I fell towards that river, the streams whereof made glad the city of God. I found it to be so in the Lord's own time.

(To be continued)

BOOK REVIEWS

One Thousand Bible Questions, by William Wileman; large paperback; pages not numbered; price £3.00 plus £1.00 postage and packing; published by The Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony, and obtainable from 1 Donald Way, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 9JB.

Some of our older readers remember answering William Wileman's Bible questions sixty to seventy years ago. Originally they were printed in a series of ten separate booklets, each containing a hundred questions. An aged friend has supplied us with one of the original booklets.

All the one thousand questions are now gathered together in one book, each question being in poetical form. For instance:

"463 – Cottages

Please search for this with earnest mind,

And mention of a cottage find:

Then willingly your search pursue,

Find 'cottages for shepherds' too."

The expressed aim is to encourage children (and older ones) to study the Word of God.

Sadly, no answers are given. Originally the solutions were sent to Mr. Wileman himself, but a list of correct answers has not been found. Interestingly, *Cheering Words* for December informs us that a friend has already provided 400 of the answers.

Many of the questions are very interesting; some are very hard. We wonder if what appealed to children in pre-war days will still appeal today?

The book is nicely produced, at a most reasonable price, with an excellent prayerful aim – so we hope it is a successful publication.

The Excellent Benjamin Keach, by Austin Walker; large paperback; 423 pages; price £12.99; published by Joshua Press, Dundas, Ontario, Canada, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is an important book. Keach (1640-1704) was both a great and good man, and it is a tragedy that he is so little known today. If there is such a thing as being a “founder,” then Benjamin Keach was under God one of the founders of the Particular Baptist denomination – as a preacher, a voluminous writer and a stalwart contender for the truth, in belief and order. We have a wonderful heritage, and it is sad that it is so little known and regarded. A minister some time ago remarked, “There is no denomination so little conscious of its glorious past as the Strict Baptists.”

So *The Excellent Benjamin Keach* is exceedingly welcome – and (shall we say?) long overdue. The author has researched the work exceedingly thoroughly and well. In a sense this biography is “*The Life and Times of Benjamin Keach*,” as there is so much concerning the background in church and state. Writing a biography is not easy, when no foundation biography was published following the subject’s death, and when the biographer is writing three hundred years later. (The work appeared to mark the 300th anniversary of Keach’s death.) *The Excellent Benjamin Keach* is well referenced though there does not appear to be an index.

Benjamin Keach, a native of Buckinghamshire, moved to London and became pastor of the Particular Baptist church in Horsleydown, just south of the River Thames. This was the church where, sixteen years after Keach’s death, Dr. Gill commenced his long and notable pastorate.

We hope it is not ungracious to mention that there are a number of printing errors, which would not be expected in such an excellent book. Also, there are one or two historical errors. For instance, the statement (p. 143) that “William III was married to Mary, one of the legitimate daughters of Charles II.” Had this been so, James II would never have succeeded to the throne, and English history would have been different.

No doubt the most interesting part of the book is the account of Keach’s early life and the persecutions he endured, for his faith, in the pillory and prison.

Much of the book deals with the remarkable amount of books which Benjamin Keach wrote. Remarkably, one or two of these sold as well as *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Two are still in print today: *Gospel Mysteries Unveiled*, an exposition of all the parables, and *Tropologia, a Key to Open Scripture Metaphors* (its modern title: *Preaching from the Types and Metaphors of the Bible*). Interestingly, Keach laid great stress on writing for children, believing that the Lord would bless His truth to them in their early days.

There was much controversy in Keach’s preaching and his writing – though it is fair to say that he was not avowedly a controversialist. Rather, he felt that wherever the truth was assailed, he must defend it. At that time the very existence of the Baptists needed to be defended. They were so maligned and the

most evil and even ridiculous things were said about them. Benjamin Keach stood very firmly for what he believed to be the right faith and the right order.

In some ways the hymnsinging controversy, in which Keach took a leading part, was very sad as it split churches, families and friends. The controversy, which erupted in the 1690s, was not whether Psalms only or hymns also should be sung in public worship, but whether there should be *any* singing. Benjamin Keach strongly felt that singing was a divinely appointed part of public worship, and that it was not for the honour and glory of God when His praises were not sung. He himself agreed with hymns as well as Psalms, and produced a good number himself – though sadly they are not of the highest quality. His memorial tablet in Winslow records that he “restored congregational singing of hymns as part of divine worship.” In a sense Benjamin Keach, rather than Dr. Watts, deserves to be called “the father of English hymnody.”

Perhaps the most noble stand which Benjamin Keach took was his most able and gracious defence of the true doctrine of justification – only through the perfect righteousness the law demands being provided by Christ’s obedience and imputed to the sinner. In this not only did he follow Scripture but also the three great seventeenth century confessions, the Westminster, the Savoy (Independent) and the Baptist. The renowned Richard Baxter had denied this truth and, though he himself died in 1691, his followers, the Neonomians, continued to contend for what became known as “Baxterianism.”

Keach counted Baxterianism a fundamental error. He wrote:

“How do some turn the gospel of God’s free grace into a law, by the performance of which, as the conditions of life and justification, tell thee, thy salvation doth depend. See what subtle opposers (of the clearest gospel) are risen up amongst us, and labour to avoid them; though their tongues should seem to be tipped with silver, yet their doctrine is copper” (page 334).

Baxter’s views have recently been summarised:

“Baxter’s gospel presents Christ’s death as an act of universal redemption, penal and vicarious though not strictly substitutionary, in virtue of which God has made a new law offering amnesty to penitent breakers of the old law. As obedience to the new law, repentance and faith are one’s personal saving righteousness” (page 338).

Keach described this as “partial apostasy,” “a poisonous notion,” “a bold and bare-faced attack against this grand fundamental of Christianity,” and contended that those who believed these errors were not “true gospel ministers” (page 341).

In denying “sincere obedience” as the ground for justification, Benjamin Keach made the scriptural position clear:

“Nothing renders a man righteous to justification in God’s sight, but the imputation of the perfect, personal righteousness of Christ, received only by the faith of the operations of God” (pages 344-345).

There is a long chapter on this vital subject which is not just history but relevant today when many are not clear on the doctrine of justification, and when Richard Baxter again, sadly, seems to be gaining renewed popularity. It is a pity that Keach’s clear, able and gracious writings are not better known.

One chapter we specially enjoyed and appreciated, “The Mysteries of the Gospel,” where Keach’s views and preaching on the covenant of grace are clearly set forth in detail. We found this delightful – so much so that we wrote on the

top of the page: "This is good!" It was, therefore, a great disappointment to find that the author comments (page 113): "Benjamin Keach was writing three hundred years ago and our understanding of the covenant of grace has become more refined." Is this typical of many evangelicals today? But we do not want the glorious truths of the covenant "refining"; they were once the glory of the pulpit in both church and chapel, and are the great need of our country today.

We are delighted that Keach has been rediscovered, and we wholeheartedly agree with the title of the book, *The Excellent Benjamin Keach* (a quotation from Ivimey).

We hope the publication of this book will arouse interest, not only in Benjamin Keach, but in many of our godly Particular Baptist forerunners. There have been many excellent men of whom we have little or no account. We are exceedingly pleased to hear that a biography of Benjamin Beddome is to appear. What about John Fawcett of Hebden Bridge? We have always thought a life of Dr. Fawcett would be both interesting and valuable.

GODLY WISHES

O that mine eyes might closèd be
 To what concerns me not to see;
 That deafness might possess mine ear
 To what concerns me not to hear;
 That truth my tongue might always tie
 From ever speaking foolishly;
 That no vain thought might ever rest,
 Or be conceivèd in my breast;
 That by each word, and deed and thought,
 May glory to my God be brought!
 But what are wishes? Lord, mine eye
 On Thee is fixèd; hear my cry,
 Wash, Lord, and purify my heart,
 And make it clean in every part;
 And when 'tis clean, Lord, keep it too,
 For that is more than I can do.

Thomas Ellwood (1660)

Gospel grace, in the right notion of it, doth not consist in abating the rigour of the law, or that for Christ's sake our sincere imperfect obedience shall be accepted unto justification instead of that which is perfect. But it lies here, viz.: in exempting us from a personal performance of perfect righteousness required by the law unto our justification, and admitting Christ to answer the law for us in our stead, who accordingly fulfilled all righteousness for us, and is become the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Thomas Cole

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
MARCH 2005

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

ABIDE WITH US

*Sermon preached by Richard de Fraine of Lutterworth, Leicestershire
(where Wycliffe once preached)*

Text: “But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them” (Luke 24. 29).

We have a circumstance related in the context of great interest to the church of God; and not only of interest to the church, but of infinite moment to every poor sinner that knows himself to be a sinner. If taught to value Christ, he will enter into the meaning of the psalmist, who said, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” There is a sweetness in meditating upon Christ who, in the great matter of salvation, is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending. Paul, speaking of Christ the Head of the church, says, “Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free: but Christ is All, and in all.” He wanted to see Christ as the theme of the Christian ministry, the blessed antidote for the poor, sin-sick sinner, the balm of Gilead, the good Physician. When I look at Christ as the sum and substance of the Christian ministry, there I behold enough in Him to employ the mind of man, however capacious, the powers of man, however great. He could never get to the end of the tale, which would be for ever telling yet untold, of the worth, worthiness and greatness of the Saviour.

If we look at the context, we shall find an account of Christ’s resurrection by the mighty power of God. Two of His disciples were journeying to Emmaus, and were conversing together about the things that had happened. Doubtless they had indulged the idea that their Master had come to set up a temporal kingdom and that, as subjects of that kingdom, they would be raised above the rest. But when He was cut off, their hopes seemed destroyed. They were considering what they were to do.

How touching does the narrative appear! Here were two solitary individuals going a solitary journey, conversing together of their prospects being blasted, their hopes cut off. They seemed left to wander alone through the world without a guide. Just at this time of perplexity, a third Person steps in. “Their eyes were holden that they should not

know Him.” He enquired the cause of their sorrow, and stayed till their eyes were opened, and then He vanished out of their sight. Their conversation was on Him crucified, on the wonders He had done, on the great things prophesied concerning Him. He became their preacher. What a mighty sermon! I have sometimes thought, if we had but that sermon Christ preached to His disciples – “Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” – what an opening of prophecy it would be! How great the subject none can tell but those that heard it!

“They drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and He made as though He would have gone further. But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them.” Leaving the literal meaning, let us endeavour to trace out the spiritual features in the text, and see if there is not an analogy between the spiritual and literal meaning of this part of the Word of God.

There are three prominent features in the text. Here, in the first place, is the great Head of the church after His resurrection from the dead, as the *church’s Saviour*. Secondly, He is the *saints’ desire*; and the desire the two brethren expressed is that of every individual who is born of God: “Abide with us: for it is toward evening.” Thirdly, here we have the *Saviour’s sympathy*: “He went in to tarry with them.”

I. First I am to notice the *church’s Saviour*. If I begin to tell of what He is, O it is impossible to describe all His beauties! He is the Chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. If we look at the context, we shall find He was a “Man of sorrows.” He was spit on, crowned with thorns, persecuted, smitten, mocked, made to carry His cross; and exposed as a malefactor between earth and heaven, His hands and feet pierced with the nails, His side with the spear. He bowed His head and cried aloud, “It is finished.” Redemption’s work was done. Now comes His glorious character. Having done redemption’s work, He presented Himself as having put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Christ has triumphed over death and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. In His resurrection from the dead He was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness.”

What a great subject is the resurrection of the Head of the church! My dear friends, it is as the apostle says, “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.” “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” If we look at Christ in His resurrection from the dead, we shall see He is the “mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.” He is “over all, God blessed for ever.” He is exhibited to us as Christ that justifieth, Christ the Head

of the church, Christ in every sense in which a poor sinner wants Him to be; Christ who is the end of the law for righteousness to every poor sinner who feels his need of such a Jesus. He has such a righteousness to give that will stand the trying hour; to all who feel their need He will give it. He has blood to pardon all their sins who feel they are guilty and are applying to Him for it. They fear they are so bad, so worthless and so vile, they will never have it. Hear Him proclaimed as the Lamb of God: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." At the last sound of the trump the dead will be raised, the guilty dead too. And before ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, He will be proclaimed the Lamb of God that took away the sin of the world.

As it regards my text, Christ is exhibited to view as just such a Jesus as a poor sinner wants. Are you dreaming of fitness, that you will wait till you are more fit to go to Jesus than you are today? You are waiting till you can carry something in your hand. You are like the patriarch when he left Laban and went to meet his brother. He sent a present, peradventure it would appease him. You feel, "He may then accept of me." This is very often the case with the children of God. We see a poor sinner, instead of going to Jesus just as he is, wants something to carry. I have been there; I have tried it again and again, and at last been forced to go as a poor sinner, having nothing to merit the favour of God. Here, when he finds he can do nothing, the sinner falls down and says, "Lord, have mercy on me, a poor sinner." This is a point, my friends, at which it is very desirable to arrive. This is a point to which they are brought who are under divine teaching.

I have often found that by stating a few of the things I have passed through, they have been blessed to the children of God.

I remember I felt what a great sinner I was, when I began to enquire how I could ever be saved. I thought it was impossible that a holy God could ever accept me. I could not see which way God Almighty could be just and the Justifier of them who believe in Jesus, having never heard three gospel sermons in my life before this time. I was a poor, careless sinner as others, going the broad road to death. When I first attended the Word preached, I conversed with some about the mighty change that is wrought in a sinner's expectations and feelings. I tried to be perfect and to live in accordance with the divine law, and found it was of no use. Then I besought the Lord to take the principle of sin out of my heart. I said, "Nothing, I am sure, ever will satisfy me till that is extracted." Yea, how oft have I gone and besought the Lord to take the principle of sin out of me.

"The more I strove against sin's power,
I sinned and stumbled but the more;

Till late I heard my Saviour say,
‘Come hither, soul, I am the Way.’”

This is the way the Lord teaches His children; He allows them to try a number of broken cisterns, to make them sick of self and sin, and make way for Himself. I used to ask Him to keep me from evil through the day. And if I went on pretty straight for a day, I thought, “A few more days like this, and I shall be a holy man” – not in part, but a perfect man. If there is any poor sinner this afternoon who is hearing me and passing through the same trials, I would say, “Look to Jesus and be ye saved. He is God, and beside Him there is no Saviour.” It is the simple look of faith, under the influence and agency of God the Holy Ghost, that brings consolation to a poor sinner’s heart. It is a simple thing.

We have here the church’s Saviour after His resurrection from the dead. He died once our souls to save, but rose again no more death to know, no more crown of thorns, no more mocking. He has now done with that for ever. He has put off His suffering robe, and put on His glory one. Here I would direct all poor, sensible sinners. Jesus alone can save you. Are you made willing to be saved? You are not more willing than He is to save you. “That,” say you, “is what I want to believe.” Now He is able to “save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” “But,” say you, “will He save such a wretch as I am?” O yes, poor sinner; go, prostrate yourself before the Lamb of God, stripped of everything, helpless and worthless, having nothing to merit His favour. Are you longing for Him, saying “Give me Christ, or else I die”? Jesus is as willing to save as thou art to be saved.

II. “But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” Here, secondly, we have the *saints’ desire*, which is the desire of the whole Christian church. By the word “church” I mean all that believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, all who are born again, the mystic body of Christ, all those who are redeemed from among men, some of every nation, kindred and tongue, who have “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” These are the church, and their desire is, “Abide with us.”

We need the Sun of Righteousness to arise over us with healing in His wings, as one says,

“Without Thy soul-reviving light
All is sad, and gloomy night.”

Without the life, refulgence, power and warmth of the Sun of Righteousness, we are but cold at best. Here at this season we behold all creation teeming with beauty and fragrance, splendidly going forward to

maturity, while the warmth of the sun is causing the fruits of the earth to ripen. So should the Christian be, as it regards the graces of the Holy Spirit in the heart. Is he not condemned in looking at the flourishing state of the herbage? Does there not seem more life and vigour in the vegetation than in the Christian? Then we need the fulfilment of the promise, "Unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings." When that blessed Sun is hid behind a cloud and restricted in His shining, then it is we have our weeping seasons. The Christian has his winter as well as summer; he has his cold, dark seasons as well as his bright, shining ones. He has his temptations as well as his spiritual consolations. Ah, my hearers, it is but dark, cold and dreary walking, without the Sun of Righteousness reviving us by His heat. It is tiresome reading the Word without the light of this Sun. It is dark attending the ordinances of the house of God without the light of the Sun of Righteousness. Nothing is done to profit without the Sun of Righteousness.

Then we may well say, "Abide with us. Shine, Thou Sun, upon us permanently, and never withdraw Thy shining or leave our souls, we beseech Thee; but warm our hearts, carry us forward, so that we may be enabled to look forward with joy; and not only forward, but within and without." I am not opposed to looking within. I dare not tell my people they have no business to look there; but I say, look without as well. Look within; examine yourselves, whether ye be possessors of the faith, whether you possess a religion of feeling. If your religion be one without feeling, it is not worth the possession. I am not about to enter on any controversial points, but I say, give me a religion that carries feeling with it, that carries a tender conscience, that takes in Christ, that has life and truth in it; a religion that draws near to God, that makes me feel where I am and what I am; and if I get at a distance from God, that lets me feel it. I do not wish to go forward if I have contracted guilt, and not feel it. I do not say we should live on our frames and feelings. I want now to live on Christ. I want to be enabled daily to live on Him, to live near to God. Therefore I say, "Abide with us as our Sun all our journey through."

What a desirable thing it is to have a guide like Christ, to have Him guiding us on till we get to the end of our journey! "Looking unto Jesus," who has been the Author, and will be the Finisher of your faith. What a great saying was that of David, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." This is my hearty prayer, "Lord, be my Guide. Leave me not; keep me by Thy mighty power. Guide me into more of the depths of the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Guide me, that I may more and more steer clear of conformity to the world, which is manifested by many professors of religion. Guide me, mighty God, that I be not left to

transgress and bring religion into contempt. Hold me up every day. I therefore want Thee ever to abide with me. Be Thou our God, our Guide, our Guest, as a daily Friend, a Friend in time of need, a 'Friend that loveth at all times.'" What a mercy it is to have an earthly friend, to have a bosom to lean upon; as creatures we think it a great mercy. But when we have such an earthly friend taken away, which is frequently the case, we stand trembling and astonished at being left alone without an earthly comforter. None, my hearers, can prove an eternal Friend but Jesus. None like unto Him! Then may the language of our souls be this: "Be Thou to me a Friend to whom I can unbosom all my cares. Abide with me, so that I may have the benefit of Thy counsel and advice. 'Abide with us,' that we may not only have Thy counsel and advice, but have Thee as a Guest, and have the pleasure of eating and drinking with Thee in a spiritual way."

"But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." There is a fulness in Christ commensurate with His love. We may go to earthly friends and be denied. But Christ is the never-ending Friend of the poor, friendless, tried Christian, who is crying out, "I have not a friend in all the world." To any who are so placed as to have no one to whom they can tell their troubles, I would say, "Remember Jesus, He is an eternal Friend; and as it regards the changes and vicissitudes of life, He is the same today, tomorrow and for ever. You can draw water out of that well of salvation today, and the spring is left behind; the waters rise again. You can go again and again; yet will never exhaust His patience. You will find a liberal spring of lovingkindness never exhausted. The more you go, the more pleased He looks upon you."

When we come to think of the worth of a redeemed soul to Jesus, of the worth of the redeemed church in His eyes, we say in answer to the question, Can the liberality and patience of Christ be exhausted? No, never! Therefore we say, "Abide with us. Be our Friend in life and death." This is the time human friendship will do us no good, as it regards real consolation. See here is the Christian come to this last important moment of his life. It may be with his friends around his bed, bidding him farewell. Not one, nor all of them, can make up Christ. No, no! He must have a spiritual Friend, an eternal Friend then, and nothing less than Christ will do. Therefore we say, "Be Thou our Friend, especially in death."

But for my part, I fear life more than death. Having a personal interest in the finished work of the Lord Jesus, the fear of death is frequently removed; and I see so many things in life which have a thousand times more reason to be feared than death. What a striking contrast there is between a God-fearing man and a sinner who lives in the

practice of sin! If there are such before me, I tell them they never will be able to look at death, think about it, or take it as a friend. If they feel something that seems to be the harbinger of death, they will draw back from it, and try to put the wheels of life in motion. Why afraid of death? Because you are a sinner against God.

III. Then in the last place we have the *Saviour's sympathy*, a request made known and a favour granted. They asked Him to abide with them, and "He went in to tarry with them."

What a blessed house was here! There were two who had the fear of God, precious subjects of grace, valuable jewels who were to shine in Immanuel's crown, and a precious Jesus among them. They had here Satan's Master, death's destroyer, the world's conqueror and overcomer, and heaven's riches. In Him are treasured up all the true riches, unsearchable riches. May the Lord grant to you and me a measure of this grace, that we may have a sip by the way, and have a little of this in our hearts, Jesus' grace, love and compassion. It was toward evening, and they were alone, filled with consternation; and Christ drew nigh. He sympathised with them. He turned in to tarry with them. So, my friends, you little think with what sympathy Christ looks upon you as His dear, tried children.

I have sometimes thought how very expressive was the sympathy of Christ at the death of Lazarus. Here were shown the compassions of the Saviour's heart. We are told He wept. He was touched in His humanity. "We have not," said Paul, "an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Wherever there is a sincere desire for Christ to be with us, there will be a fear of sinning against Him; there may be also a fear lest we shall prove apostates – lest we shall fall into some dreadful sin. The Lord knows I often tremble when I feel what is in my heart, what a wicked wretch I am. "O Lord, keep under my vile nature, keep my conscience tender, take up Thy abode in my heart, never leave me, ever abide with me, for fear I should sin against Thee."

This being the case, the Saviour looks at such with a sympathetic love. "He went in to tarry with them." He loved them; they were dear to Him, and He was dear to them. If you read the 40th chapter of Isaiah, verse 11, you will see how it expresses the care of Jesus over the little ones: "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." Only think of the care of the great Shepherd; the tender lambs He will take and carry in His bosom.

I find I have exceeded my time. I cannot close my remarks without asking a few important questions. Where are you? What think you of

these things? What think you of Christ? Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Do you feel a desire to have your sins pardoned, your conscience purged from dead works, an interest in Christ, a desire to hang on Him, to grow up in Him, to live to His glory, to have Him in your heart, the hope of glory? I would say, blessed are the people who are in such a case.

But if not so, what has been your conduct through the past week? With what have you been seeking to please yourselves? Has it been with the pomps and vanities of this world? Some are young in the broad way, seeking pleasure in that which will never afford them any. I can say I sought pleasure in everything years ago, and can testify, as a living man, vanity is stamped on everything but Christ. I pray God to give you a religion to seek the one thing needful, eyes turned off from vanity, hearts to serve the living and true God. I entreat the Lord of heaven that He may grant to you, ere time drops the scene, the true Friend, Jesus; that amid the general wreck of nature you may find Him more precious to you than ever, in making your exit out of time into eternity. I leave these remarks to the blessing of God. Amen.

Richard de Fraine (1803-1882) was J.K. Popham's pastor. He first heard him at Nottingham, and wrote:

"By the mouth of His servant de Fraine of Lutterworth, God counselled me and instructed me in the doctrines of free grace. Whereas I was trying to stand on works, which never afforded me standing room, He showed me the standing of a sinner, when good, was in *grace*. Dear room in Thurland Street, Nottingham, where I heard Mr. de Fraine! His text was Romans 5.2: 'By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' Never can I forget or give up the life, light and power accompanying that sermon."

When he was twenty years old Mr. Popham was baptized by Mr. de Fraine at Lutterworth, where the latter was pastor from 1839 to 1882, and where Mr. Popham buried him.

On Richard de Fraine's memorial tablet was this testimony to him:

"In his preaching he constantly exalted a precious Christ, and laid the sinner low. The Lord gave him many seals to his ministry and souls for his hire, both in this neighbourhood and others which he visited."

"Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." And what a mercy it is when we can bend our back to every stroke of His chastising rod, and believe that all is meant for our spiritual good! These afflictions produce, under divine teaching, exercises of soul before God, shake us out of the miserable lees and dregs of carnality and self, and make us long for and desire those gracious visitations which alone can preserve our spirit.

J.C. Philpot

THE CHURCH AT EPHEBUS

By Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1810-1840)

“Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Rev. 2. 1-7).

In the second and third chapters of the Revelation are written seven epistles to the seven churches of Asia; and they are sweet, because they show us not only what the mind of Christ *was*, but what it *is*, now that He is in glory.

The gospels are very sweet because they show us what the mind of Christ was in the days of His flesh when He tabernacled with men upon earth; but *these* are sweet, because they show us that Jesus is the same when standing at the right hand of the Father as when He stood by the Sea of Galilee; that He is the same now while holding the reins of the universe as when He stood by His disciples, and blessing them said, “Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.”

This epistle is to the church of Ephesus, the chief of the churches of Asia, the church to which Paul went twice, where he remained for three years, and where he left Timothy. Let us see:

First, *In what character Christ is mentioned here.* He is said to be holding the seven stars in His right hand, and walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. First, He “holdeth the seven stars in His right hand”; these stars are His ministers. Now, the right hand is the place of power; ministers only shine as long as they are in the hand of Christ. People now look too much to ministers; they expect to get wisdom from them; but we are not put up to be between you and Christ. As I have told you before, the only use of the pole was to hold up the brazen serpent. No one thought of looking at the pole: so are we here to hold up Christ in the sight of you all; we are to give testimony to the truth: we are witnesses for Christ; we are to hold up Jesus before you, and before ourselves too; so that we shall disappear, and nothing shall be seen but Christ. The star of Bethlehem led the wise men, and stood over the place where the young Child lay; so are we to be the star, to lead you to the

place where the young Child lies. The morning star goes out when the sun appears, and many stars go out when the soul has been led to the Sun.

And second, Jesus “walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.” He walketh in the midst of the churches; He is in this church this night. “Go ye into all the world.” “What, Lord! shall we go in among these wicked people? Shall we leave Thee, and go into that dazzling, into that cruel world?” Yes, but, “lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” This is what Christ said upon earth, but perhaps He does not say this now? Yes, He walked in the midst of the golden candlesticks when on earth, and He walketh in the midst of them still. Jesus walketh in the midst of believers; they are the candlesticks; they were once of cast metal, but united to Christ, they become gold, pure gold. What little Samuel did was to walk among the candlesticks and see that they were kept burning: so doth Christ. He walketh in the midst of believers, to preserve them, to see that they burn, to pour in fresh oil, to give the Holy Spirit. If you were to put a lamp in a place where there was no air, it would go out; and yet how is it that believers are kept in this world? It takes all the power of God to do it; it takes all power in heaven and in earth; but He is able, and He will do it. They would soon grow dim, but He will keep them burning.

Now let us see, second, *What Christ says in the praise of Ephesus*. “I know thy works.” It is *Jesus* that knows them. Now does this make you quake – does it make you fear – does it make you tremble from head to foot, to think that the eye of Christ is upon you, that *He* says, *I* know thy works? Why should it? Because when Jesus says to you, *I* know thy sin; you should say to Him, *I* know Thy sufferings. When He says to you, *I* know all thy wants, that thou hast many; then you should say to Him, *I* know Thy fulness. When He says to you, *I* know that thou hast got little strength; then say you to Him, *I* know that Thou hast got all strength, that Thou art almighty. When He says to you, *I* know thy folly; then say you to Him, *I* know Thy wisdom – what treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Thee. When He says unto you, *I* know what darkness is in thee; then say you to Him, *I* know what light is in Thee. For what does David say in the 139th Psalm? “O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether”; and then rejoicing he says, “How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

But then Jesus knows your good works too. He knows every cup of water given for His sake. He knows every throb of love in your bosom for Himself, every act of affection to His people, to the brethren. Every believer feels that his own works are nothing, and it is right that he should feel so; every believer looks upon them in this way, because he feels there is so much vileness in everything he does, such a mixture of motives. For instance, if you were to be kind to a stranger, you may have in doing so but one grain of love to Christ and a hundred grains of other feelings: perhaps love of praise, or a desire to be thought well of. Now I will tell you what Christ does. He sprinkles the hundred grains with His own blood, He forgets them all, and treasures up the one grain of love to Himself, and says unto you, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience."

The second thing Christ says in their praise is, "Thou canst not bear them which are evil." This is a sure mark of a Christian; they cannot bear them which are evil. They say, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity, for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping." Now, if I were to look around at a Christian here and there, I would find that they feel this; but I would like to see more of it, a great deal more. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord"; for there can never be friendship between Christ and the world. Not that you must not walk on the same streets with them; but if ye *have* to live in Sodom, be like Lot, who vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds. But be ye rather like Abraham, and dwell in the land of Hebron. You are quite a different people from the world; "ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people"; you have a different birth, you are born from above; you have a different education, you are taught of God; you are on a different journey, you are travelling towards Zion; you have different resting-places from the world, you rest by the wells of salvation; you have a different deathbed – you say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" and you have a different home.

Notice now the third thing Christ says of them: "Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and thou hast found them liars." It is said that in the latter days many shall rise up saying they are Christ. *That day is nearer than some of you think.* Now are there not many false apostles in our day? Are there not some who try to deceive and lead away many? Try them by "the law and the testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." If you bid them believe what they say, on their *own* word, believe it *not*; try them by the Word. The Bereans were more noble; they searched to see whether or not these things were so. Be ye noble with their nobility.

Now, let us see the fourth thing Christ says in their praise: "And hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." It is far easier to do than to suffer; it is far easier to be a Whitefield, to preach from land's end to land's end, than to lie on a bed of sickness. We have much to make us faint, to make us sigh and cry for the abominations that are done in the midst of us; and mostly all of you have sorrows. Some of you have sorrows that you never breathed beyond your own bosom, even sorrows without a name; and some of you have sorrows that you tell from kindred to kindred breast. You have sorrows because your children care for none of these things, or because those who are dear to you are on beds of sickness. But we must not faint or grow weary; we must bear. Resignation is a very sweet grace: it can only be cultivated here. The believer has two kinds of graces – he has purity and resignation. God has purity, but God can have no resignation, for He has all sovereignty, He is almighty. Yet resignation to God's will is a very sweet grace; it is a flower that grows on the earth – it will not bloom yonder. It is much easier to go about a whole lifetime preaching, to preach night and day, than to be patient under sickness. There are many saints who suffered much upon earth, now shining bright in glory.

Now, let us see *what Jesus blames them for*. He says, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." *Somewhat* is not in the original – it should not be there at all. We would think by this, it is some little thing. It should be, I *have* against thee, or, I have *this* against thee, that thou hast left thy first love. Now, do you know what it is to have been in an agony when awakened by God, to have seen your corruptions? And do you remember what you felt when you saw an unveiled Christ, when you saw first a crucified Christ? Do you remember when your sins accused you, and when you said, *Behold, my Surety, who shall condemn?*

When a beloved friend was ill, and when his bosom heaved and his eye flashed, do you remember what gladness filled your breast at the first signs of returning health, when the eye became clearer, and the breast beat more quietly? And do you remember, too, what you felt when lying in the darkness of the night, and saying, Would God it were morning; when the first streak of light burst in upon you, with what gladness it filled your breast? And do you remember when first you were introduced to Christ, when first you entered into the presence of God, when you were enabled to say, *He is mine?* You had often heard of Him before; but do you remember the time when first you could say, "My Beloved is mine"? What a burning love you had then in your breast! Do you remember the leap of joy that came into your bosom? This was *first love*, this was *the love of espousals*; and this is what you have left. Do you not remember sacraments when you had a greater glow of love in

your bosom to Christ in the anticipation of them than you have of our approaching sacrament?

I do not know, but I believe (I speak of my own parish, for I know it best) that there is no word I could find in the Bible that I could address to you that would be more applicable to most of you than this, and this is what Jesus is saying unto you this night: "I have this against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." It is not a man that has this against you; it is not I who have this against you; it is *Christ*. It is He who suffered for your sake; it is He who was crucified, who died on the cross, who left His home for your sake; it is *Jesus* that has this against you; and He is saying unto you, Was I such a small Object of love that ye could only love Me for one night, that ye could not watch with Me one hour, that ye grew weary of loving Me so soon?

And I think I may apply this to the unconverted here; for although you never had the first love, still there are many among you who were much more anxious than you are now. Is hell less dreadful than it once was? Is it not worthwhile that you should be awakened again? There are many among you who have fled out of Sodom, but who have never entered Zoar.

And now, let us see *what will be the punishment of those who have left their first love*. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

Christ says you are to remember from whence you have fallen. You were once built upon the cornerstone – O how you have fallen! You were once as a red-hot coal – O how cold you have got! You once had more zeal for the cause of Christ – O how you have fallen! And whilst you sit and think of this, you are to repent and do the first works. What! must I be converted again? Yes, you must be converted again, or else Christ will come quickly. You see He is to lose no time about it; so I pray you repent quickly, or else Christ will remove thy candlestick. O how dreadful are the punishments of Christ! He may take away your minister; and He may also take away the light of His Word. You see how it was with Jonah; for the sake of one backsliding soul a whole sea was put in motion. So may God, for the sake of some backsliding soul, remove your candlestick out of its place. O Lord, give me suffering; give me sickness, give me poverty, give me anything, give me death itself; but do not remove Thy light from me, for then I shall get dark and lifeless!

And lastly, let us see what is said in the seventh verse, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." And so we are fighting, we are in a warfare, and I know there are some of you who are struggling, struggling hard, and

you *are* overcoming. Well then, you shall eat of the tree of life; you shall eat of Christ, who is in the midst of the paradise of God.

May this prove a happy sacrament to many of you if we ever see it, if our candlestick be not removed before then! May it be a sacrament that shall be unto you the renewal of your first love!

QUESTION AND ANSWER

In Colossians 1. 21 and 22, God speaks of the wonderful blessing of reconciliation, and the perfect standing of His people in Christ. Why, then, does He add (verse 23): "If ye continue ... and be not moved away," etc? Why this if? It appears to be legal.

As an answer we give Dr. Gill's exposition.

"If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." In the doctrine of faith which they had received and embraced; and in the grace of faith and the exercise of it, which was implanted in them; and in the profession of faith which they had made. Not that the virtue and efficacy of Christ's blood, sufferings and death, and reconciliation of their persons to God thereby, depended upon their faith, and abiding in it; but that faith and continuance in it were necessary means of their presentation in unblemished holiness and righteousness. For if they had not faith, or did not abide in it, or if a good work of grace was not wrought upon their souls, and that performed until the day of Christ, they could not be presented holy and blameless. This shows the necessity of the saints' final perseverance in faith and holiness, and is mentioned with this view, to put them upon a concern about it, and to make use of all means, under divine grace, to enjoy it; and nothing could more strongly incline and move unto it, than the blessed effect of Christ's death, reconciliation and the end of it, to present the reconciled ones blameless – in order to which it is necessary they should hold on and out to the end. Hence the Ethiopic version reads the words, not as a condition, but as an exhortation enforced by what goes before: "Therefore be ye established in the faith."

It follows, "grounded and settled," not on the sandy foundation of man's own righteousness and peace made by his own performances, but upon the foundation and rock, Christ, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail, and so shall never finally and totally fall away, being rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith of Him – in the doctrines of faith, respecting peace by His blood, justification by His righteousness and life by His death; and so continue steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in His work.

“And be not moved away from the hope of the gospel”; the hope of eternal life and happiness, which is set before us in the gospel; which that gives a good and solid ground and foundation of, in the Person, blood and righteousness of Christ; and is the instrumental means in the hand of the Spirit of begetting to it, and of encouraging and increasing it. The law gives no hope of eternal life to a poor sinner; it works wrath and ministers death. There is nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment by it. But the gospel encourages to hope in the Lord from the consideration of rich mercy and plenteous redemption in Him; and this hope of the gospel is an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, and not to be let go.

CHRIST OUR GOD

By J.C. Philpot

The words “our God” here (Deut. 32. 3), if we look a little more closely at the context, will be found chiefly applicable to the Lord Jesus Christ who, in covenant relationship, is especially “our God.” We find, therefore, that Thomas, when the Lord so graciously removed his unbelief, at once worshipped and adored Him with the words, “My Lord and my God.” He there owned and acknowledged the deity of Jesus Christ, which he saw shining through the veil of His humanity.

We therefore ascribe greatness unto our God when we show the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ as “God over all, blessed for ever,” and proclaim that in consequence of His being the great God of heaven and earth, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, all that He said and did is invested with all the greatness of God. In a word, that there is a divine greatness in His Person, as Immanuel God with us; a divine greatness in His blood, as being emphatically the blood of the Son of God; a greatness in His righteousness, as being a righteousness wrought out by God in flesh; a greatness in His mercy as the mercy of God; in His love as the love of God; and in His faithfulness as the faithfulness of God.

When we thus ascribe faithfulness unto the Lord Jesus Christ as our covenant God, that doctrine will ever “drop as the rain,” and that speech will ever “distil as the dew,” because the Holy Ghost will honour it, power will attend it, and it will be blessed to the hearts and consciences of those who fear God. Nor has the Holy Spirit ever owned any doctrine which has not clearly set forth the glorious deity and suffering humanity of the Lord Jesus.

RECONCILIATION: HEALING THE BREACH

By J.C. Philpot

What a wondrous way, then, has God devised in His own eternal mind, that the breach might be healed, that agreement might be made, that sinning man might be reconciled to his justly-offended Maker, and yet that none of His glorious perfections should be tarnished or impaired! And what plan was this? Hear it, O heaven and earth! That the Son of God – His Son by nature and essence – His co-equal and co-eternal Son – should take into union with His divine Person a pure, sinless and spotless humanity; for as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, it was necessary that He Himself likewise should take part of the same (Heb. 2. 14).

This was the will of God which Christ came to do, as we read: “Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book” – that is, the book of God’s eternal decrees – “it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart” (Psa. 40. 7, 8). God prepared for His dear Son a body, as the apostle says, quoting Psalm 40. 6: “Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared [“fitted,” *margin*] Me” (Heb. 10. 5). This was a pure, holy and incorruptible humanity – the body taken in the womb of the virgin, offered as a bleeding sacrifice on the cross, but now at the right hand of God in heaven.

Man had sinned, offended, gone astray, become involved in transgression. Before, then, there could be any healing of the breach, any reconciliation of man to God, flesh and blood must be assumed, that in that nature an atonement might be made for sin, justice be fully satisfied, the law righteously obeyed, its penalty removed, and its curse taken away. This mighty work none but the Son of God could accomplish, nor He except by becoming Man. As God, Christ could not suffer, bleed or die. As God, He could not endure the wrath due to transgression, sustain the curse of the law, or work out an obedience such as it demanded. Deity can no more obey than it can suffer, bleed and die. Yet there must be obedience, or the law cannot be fulfilled; there must be suffering, or the wrath of God cannot be appeased; there must be blood-shedding, or a sacrifice cannot be offered; there must be death, for to die is a main part of the sacrifice. If the surety take the place of the debtor, he must endure the penalty of the debt; if the substitute stand in the room of the criminal, he must suffer the punishment of the crime.

O wondrous scheme, that the Son of God should take our nature into union with His own divine Person, and in that nature render an obedience perfectly acceptable to God; an obedience which must be rendered, but

one that we could not render; an obedience exactly such as the law demanded: perfect in thought, word and deed. Outraged Justice else might say, "Where is my victim? I demand a victim: it must be either the criminal or someone in his stead. I cannot waive my rightful claim. I must have it satisfied, or else I should cease to be Justice." The blessed Lord comes forward and says, "Justice, take thy claim. Here is My innocent head: let thy thunderbolt fall upon it. Law, what dost thou demand? Perfect obedience. I render it. What dost thou inflict upon the criminal as the penalty of disobedience? The curse. I endure it. Holiness of God, what dost thou require? A spotless purity of soul and body, of heart, lip and life; perfect love to God and man. Here I am: I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law in its length, breadth and spirituality, in its holiness, purity and power, is in my heart."

Thus by the substitution of the Son of God as rendering an obedience in our nature, all the perfections of God were glorified, all His attributes harmonised, justice was satisfied, the law magnified, and the holiness of God well pleased. Complete satisfaction being thus made to all the requisitions of justice, room was given for mercy and love, pity and compassion to fallen man to come into full play through the channel of a Redeemer's meritorious sufferings and death. There was no other way whereby the breach could be healed; but by this divinely contrived plan it has been healed, and that most effectually.

"THEN COMETH THE WICKED ONE"

From Benjamin Keach on The Parable of the Sower

"Then cometh the wicked one" (Matt. 13. 19)

Question: Whither comes he?

I answer, he comes into the assemblies of God's people, he comes where the good seed is sown. Many devils or wicked spirits attend and wait to catch the Word out of men's thoughts and hearts whilst it is preached. O take heed of those ravenous fowls.

Question: When doth Satan come?

Answer: When any begin to hear, and diligently to attend upon the Word of God: "When any one heareth the Word of the kingdom" (Matt. 13. 19). He fears no person, noble nor ignoble, old or young; though you see him not, he being a spirit, yet he is by you, he stands among the children of God. Satan, my brethren, comes always to church; he is one of the first that comes, and the last that goes from thence; when any word that suits the state of a sinner falls from the mouth of the preacher, then comes the wicked one to catch it away.

Question: How doth Satan come?

1. I answer, he comes by darting into the heart roving and wandering thoughts, to take the hearer's mind quite away from that which concerns his everlasting welfare; he comes by putting vain and idle cogitations into his heart and mind.

2. He comes to see if he can rock the hearer of the Word asleep, or make him drowsy or heavy under the Word. What is the cause, think you, that people are so subject to fall asleep under the Word? nay, more ready then to take a nap than when they are elsewhere? Alas, it is from Satan. I have heard of a woman that chose to go to the place of God's worship, or where and when the Word was preached, that she might have a sound sleep; she found at such times she could sooner sleep than at any other time or place.

3. He comes by many inward suggestions to stir up their natural corruption and fill them with prejudice against the Word.

Question: Why doth Satan thus come? What end hath he in it?

Answer: No good end, you may be sure.

1. He comes as thieves come to rob and steal; his end and design is to steal the word out of the heart. The devil is a great thief; he is not a pocket-picker, but a heart-picker; he comes not to get away your gold or silver, but that which is of far greater value, viz., the Word.

2. His end is to hinder all that hear the Word (if possible) from believing; he is not so great an enemy to the hearing of the Word as he is to the believing and right applying of it; he never loses the sinner until the sinner believes and truly takes hold of Jesus Christ. Christ prays for all His elect that they may believe. Faith ruins Satan's design and spoils his kingdom, faith unites the soul to Christ; therefore it is no wonder the devil is such an enemy to believing. Faith is that shield whereby we quench all Satan's fiery darts; it is that by which we resist him and overcome him.

3. He comes to hinder sinners from considering, knowing and understanding the Word; none receive it truly but such that understand it, that know the necessity and excellency of God's Word.

4. He comes to obstruct and hinder sinners of salvation, and so to blind men's minds that they may be lost for ever.

Question: But why? to catch the Word out of the heart?

Answer: Because if he can get it out of the heart, he knows it can do no soul any good; he cares not how much of the Word a man gets into his mouth, or into his head, so that he can keep it out of his heart, or catch it out of that.

2. Because if once the heart truly receives the Word, Satan knows it will soon take root there and cause the soul to bring forth fruit.

3. Because the Word rightly received into the heart is like to leaven that will quickly leaven the whole lump.

4. Because if once the Word of God be hid in the heart, he knows he cannot steal it away; David well understood this, and therefore he says, “Thy Word have I hid in my heart” (Psa. 119. 11).

5. Because he knows when the Word is truly received into the heart, Christ is at that time received also, and the soul is happy for ever. O then a stronger than he comes, and binds the strong man armed.

6. And lastly, because the devil knows if he can but hinder the Word from brooding and rooting on or in the heart, the best sermon that can be preached will be ineffectual to that person.

No wonder then that Satan strives to catch the Word out of the hearts of sinners; he doth, it is true, what he can, to hinder a man from hearing the Word, for fear he should not be able to prevent its being received; for it must be taken into the ear before it can be received (as it is preached) into the heart.

O see what ground your hearts are, examine yourselves; for according to the nature of the ground will the success of the seed that is sown be. Are your hearts well ploughed up, or has the Spirit of God, by convictions, broken and pierced your hearts, so that you, like them of old, are made to cry out, “Sirs, what shall we do?”

And be sure do not think it enough to hear the Word; content not yourselves to come [merely] to hear, lest Satan’s coming prevents thy profiting by it.

THE RING

By F.W. Krummacher

The well-known parable of the “Prodigal Son” is full of meaning and import, even in its minutest trait. The most trifling articles of raiment or ornament with which the “restored one” is presented by his father are images of imperishable, divine treasures. What is to be understood by the best robe and shoes is easily shown. The attention is especially called to the ring which, according to Luke (Luke 15. 22), the father places upon the hand of his beloved son. What meaning do we discern in that? A ring given as a present is ever a testimonial and pledge of favour and affection. When Pharaoh, influenced by esteem for Joseph, confidently placed in his hands the helm of government, he presented him with a ring as a confirmation of his friendly feelings. Rings of affiance and marriage, what are they but symbolic presents, by which we reciprocally assure each other of our faithfulness?

Now, I know of one ring; and whoever possesses it is truly happy. And were he in possession of naught else but this jewel, he would still be rich enough to leave unenvied both kings and emperors. This ring,

indeed, is not formed of gold, nor of any other earthly matter. Neither does it come from a bridegroom of this world, nor from one of the high and mighty of the earth. It is of wonderful, mysterious workmanship. The inscriptions with which it is adorned are, above all measure, sweet and delightful. Upon it is engraven the sentence, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love"; and that of, "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." Paul possessed this ring; whence he could exclaim with joy, "I have obtained mercy." Peter had it, when he exclaimed in triumph, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope." O many, many have already possessed it; and all who had it were joyful, blessed, divinely happy mortals; happy even in the wilderness, happy even in the field of battle, happy even on the scaffold. This ring is miraculous.

It will no longer be doubtful to you what is to be understood by the ring. The ring signifies that which we call assurance of grace, or the testimony of God in the soul, that we in Christ are His children. Certainly, we are to be already considered as blessed, if only we stand in grace, no matter whether we have the full assurance of it whilst we are living, or whether it be concealed from us. But double bliss must it be, to be able in the valley of the shadow of death to boast with joyful consciousness: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities ... nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Yes, that ring well merits that we should give everything to gain possession of it. There is no amulet more worthy of acquirement than this; it opens for us already, on this side of the grave, a peaceful paradise.

If we enquire farther whence this miraculous ring originally sprung, we receive only a mysterious explanation. The ring has cost not a little! Not to us, who are invested with it, but to Him who has presented it to us. Lightly enough does it sound to our ears, when the father in our text says: "Put a ring on his hand"; but what has he not had to sacrifice before he was able to say thus? Our beloved God is rich, it is true; who doubts it? and such a ring He may have possessed amongst His treasures for the hands of His holy angels, perhaps, but not for the hands of the fallen children of Adam. He could give no marriage ring to sinners, nor testify of His love. His holiness demanded rather separation from sinners; His righteousness and truth required their eternal estrangement. One thing was necessary: that we who were polluted should become again pure before Him; one thing was indispensable – previous mediation and atonement. You know that He Himself undertook in the mission, resignation and suffering of His only begotten Son to overcome the hopeless difficulty. Had this mysterious mediation not taken place, then God might have had iron chains in which to hand us over to the powers

of the depths below, but no nuptial and grace-assuring ring would He possess for us. In the passion-history of our Surety you behold the laboratory in which this jewel was first won and perfected. The offering of the cross presents the firmest and immutable ground, resting upon which the holiness of God can consist with the declaration to transgressors, "By grace are ye saved."

Dearly, dearly, has that ring been purchased! To that ring adheres the bloody sweat of the Eternal Son! If it be farther asked, who is to receive that precious ring? the answer is this: "Only for the heart thirsting for grace is that jewel intended." If any other, a pharisee, a torpid worldling or a slave of sin, boasts that he possesses the ring, then he is a thief and has stolen the ring. But God's eyes are like flames of fire and search into all. For such a man there awaits a dreadful period, when by the sentence of the judge – "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not!" – the ring so lawlessly usurped is again reclaimed and snatched away. But let not him who has in his heart thirsted after Jesus, because in the sight of God his sin was extremely sinful, lose courage from the consciousness that he is a sinner; and if he be one in a higher degree than others, let him consider that a Rahab, a David, a Manasseh, have also received this ring. Let him only persevere for the precious jewel at the throne of grace, not for the ring of the unfallen angels, but for that which was gained for the publicans, and he will receive it.

Certainly, he must wait with patience till the Father's hour come. He cannot receive it till the Father give it him. Men cannot, however they may desire, give it to him. Many things are done in order to gain it. We compare ourselves with other Christians, in order to drink from common wells the consoling confidence that we are in grace. We examine what the Scripture presents as signs of the state of grace, and seek to ascertain whether we cannot discover one or other of them in ourselves. But if even we can say to ourselves, "Yes, I find this and that in me; I suffer sorrow; I hunger and thirst after righteousness, I am poor in spirit," still there remains between this and the joyful conclusion, "Consequently the kingdom of heaven belongs to me!" one step which we cannot take without the help of God. He must, by His Spirit, place the ring upon the finger. This He does, when and how it pleaseth Him. Many He leaves to yearn after it for a long, long time. To others He presents it at the first meeting. Thus with the prodigal son. No wonder that the elder brother looked jealous.

O blessed is he to whom the ring has been apportioned! Whosoever has received the ring from God is freed from everything. Such an one has no longer a consciousness of his sins, and the Spirit bears testimony to his spirit that he is a child of God. The most bitter draughts become sweet and drinkable, if we have this ring to dip into them. This ring causes us to sing cheerfully, even amidst the storm of adversity. With

this ring we may suffer in the hottest, glowing fire of tribulation, and yet not be consumed, nay, are even housed in cool security. When all forsake and desert us, this ring enables us to bear up cheerfully. This ring gives courage in every struggle, and ah, how valiant, how triumphant does it render us! The sweetest slumbers, the most cheerful readiness for pilgrimage, does this ring impart. Before this ring the gates of heaven fly open, and by the power thereof we send an “Abba” to the heart of the Father. Yes, this ring robs death of its terrors. It passes through the dark vale with bright, festive brilliance. What was it made the countenance of Stephen, while being stoned to death, beam like that of an angel? It was this ring. What was it that transformed old Simeon into a youth, and made him so joyful at parting? It was effected by the ring of surety, of which we speak.

Yes, whoever has this ring granted to him has found the philosopher’s stone; he has obtained the wonder-working treasure. Whoever wishes to reduce to reality his thoughts, aspirations, struggles, let him seek the acquirement of this jewel. Whoever possesses it, let him not permit himself to be deprived of it by any robber-hand. Were it Moses that would rob us of it, were it the accuser in the abyss below, were it our own conscience, let us force them, by pointing to the blood on the cross, to pass on. But let us, however, pray to God, that He may daily brighten this ring and preserve it in its brilliancy. A daily, refreshed consciousness of our state of grace is the source of all holiness. Fear oppresses, palsies, chains and renders powerless. Joy in the Lord is our strength.

450 YEARS AGO

1555 – The Year of Martyrdoms

After a foolish and deplorable effort to obtain the crown for Lady Jane Grey, Edward VI was succeeded by his eldest sister, Mary, daughter of Henry VIII and his first Queen, Catherine of Aragon, and best known in English history by the ill-omened name of “Bloody Mary.” Mary had been brought up from her infancy as a rigid adherent of the Romish Church. She was, in fact, a very papist of papists, conscientious, zealous, bigoted and narrow-minded in the extreme. She began at once to pull down her brother’s work in every possible way, and to restore popery in its worst and most offensive forms. Step by step she and her councillors marched back to Rome, trampling down one by one every obstacle, and as thorough as Lord Strafford in going straight forward to their mark. The Mass was restored; the English service was taken away; the works of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Tyndale, Bucer, Latimer, Hooper and

Cranmer were proscribed. Cardinal Pole was invited to England. The foreign Protestants resident in England were banished. The leading divines of the Protestant Church of England were deprived of their offices and, while some escaped to the Continent, many were put in prison. The old statutes against heresy were once more brought forward, primed and loaded. And thus by the beginning of 1555 the stage was cleared, and that bloody tragedy, in which Bishops Bonner and Gardiner played so prominent a part, was ready to begin.

For, unhappily for the credit of human nature, Mary's advisers were not content with depriving and imprisoning the leading English Reformers. It was resolved to make them abjure their principles, or to put them to death. One by one they were called before special Commissions, examined about their religious opinions, and called upon to recant, on pain of death if they refused. No third course, no alternative was left to them. They were either to give up Protestantism and receive popery, or else they were to be burned alive. Refusing to recant, they were one by one handed over to the secular power, publicly brought out and chained to stakes, publicly surrounded with faggots, and publicly sent out of the world by that most cruel and painful of deaths, the death by fire. All these are broad facts which all the apologists of Rome can never gainsay or deny.

The first leading English Reformer who crossed the river, as a martyr in Mary's reign, was John Rogers, a London minister, Vicar of St. Sepulchre's, and Prebendary and Reader of Divinity at St. Paul's. He was burned in Smithfield on Monday, the 4th of February, 1555. Rogers was born at Deritend, in the parish of Aston, near Birmingham. He was a man who, in one respect, had done more for the cause of Protestantism than any of his fellow-sufferers. In saying this I refer to the fact that he had assisted Tyndale and Coverdale in bringing out a most important version of the English Bible, a version commonly known as Matthew's Bible. Indeed, he was condemned as "Rogers, *alias* Matthew." This circumstance, in all human probability, made him a marked man, and was one cause why he was the first who was brought to the stake.

Rogers' examination before Gardiner gives us the idea of his being a bold, thorough Protestant, who was clear on all points of the Romish controversy, and was able to give a reason for his opinions. At any rate, he seems to have silenced and abashed his examiners even more than most of the martyrs did. But argument, of course, went for nothing. "Woe to the conquered!" If he had the Word, his enemies had the sword.

On the morning of his martyrdom he was roused hastily in his cell in Newgate, and hardly allowed time to dress himself. He was then led forth to Smithfield on foot, within sight of the Church of St. Sepulchre,

where he had preached, and through the streets of the parish where he had done the work of a pastor. By the wayside stood his wife and ten children (one a baby) whom the diabolical cruelty of Bishop Bonner had flatly refused him leave to see in prison. He just saw them, but was hardly allowed to stop, and then walked on calmly to the stake, repeating the 51st Psalm.

An immense crowd lined the street and filled every available spot in Smithfield. Up to that day men could not tell how English Reformers would behave in the face of death, and could hardly believe that prebendaries and dignitaries would actually give their bodies to be burned for their religion. But when they saw John Rogers, the first martyr, walking steadily and unflinchingly into a fiery grave, the enthusiasm of the crowd knew no bounds. They rent the air with thunders of applause. Even Noailles, the French Ambassador, wrote home a description of the scene, and said that Rogers went to death "as if he was walking to his wedding." By God's great mercy he died with comparative ease. And so the first Marian martyr passed away.

THROUGH MANY DANGERS

*The autobiography of Isaac Lewis (1823-1896), for over twenty years
pastor at Staplehurst, Kent
(Continued from page 61)*

There is a time to favour Zion. I have proved it to be so, and in the Lord's own way. I have many times envied the beast of the field. At one time, when labouring under the sentence of death in my soul, I saw a bird flying in the air. O how I wished I was that bird! I said to myself, "You have no soul, so there is no hereafter with you; but I have a soul to be saved or to be damned." This is the place where every mouth is stopped and all the world becomes guilty before God.

I was an awful blasphemer, as I have stated, when in the world. In the exercise of my mind and in the multitude of my thoughts, this was once presented to my mind: "You do not swear now"; and something whispered, "You may do so, if you like." I so far fell in with the suggestion of the enemy that I tried to think of an oath but, to my astonishment, I could not. I know the place and where I was seated at the time. It was on the main hatch of the little ship called the *S.S.*, in the River Crouch. Truly the Son of God came into this world to destroy the works of the devil, and sure I am that this was the devil's work and that of my own deceitful heart. Nothing short of the eternal Son of God could have deprived me of the remembrance of such unhallowed

thoughts as they were. O how true it is that the devil is as a chained lion! So far thou shalt go, but no further.

At another time, when going to my work, sailing down the same river, suddenly so great a trembling and fear came upon me, because I thought the mast would fall on me and kill me, and that I should surely go to hell, that my soul groaned out, "O Lord, deliver me from going to hell"; when these words were brought with much power and sweetness:

"Let your faith be ever so small,
From thence to hell you ne'er shall fall."

I was lying on my back at the time. I sprang on my feet and cried out, "I shall never go to hell." I know not where these words were; but one thing I did know, they came with power and comfort, and caused a hope to spring up in my soul. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."

But sad to say, I did not live long under the enjoyment of this hope. I was soon again left in darkness and sometimes feared it was all a delusion, and that I should never obtain the blessings I craved. I was obliged to go to the Lord with these words: "Lord, save, or I perish!" "Lord, have mercy upon a poor, blind, sinful worm!" I was sorely tried about prayer, because I could not bow my knees in prayer, as the enemy tempted me that it would be mocking God to kneel down to pray; but I was obliged to cry for that mercy which I needed. The great God says, "The needy shall not alway be forgotten." Truly it is impossible for a living soul to stop crying. You might as well try to stop a drowning man from crying and struggling, while sensible of his dangerous position, as to stop a living soul from crying when he feels the arrows of death in his soul, and sees the avenger of blood close to him, and the wrath of God in a broken law against sin in his conscience. A cry for mercy does not spring from the law, but from the mercy of God in Christ.

Sometimes when the minister has been speaking he would say, "A prayerless soul is a Christless soul." O how this would wound me! O, I have thought, if I could but bend my knees in prayer, then the Lord would answer me; but to my disappointment I found that bending the knees was not prayer. The Lord says He will pour upon the house of David the spirit of prayer, and the grace of supplication. I have learnt by painful experience, as well as from the Word of God, that true prayer in the soul is the breath of God. Thus the Lord was pleased to show Ezekiel (37. 9): "Then said He unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." This is the sweet effusion of the Holy Spirit breathing

into the dead sinner's soul the breath of eternal life. This prophesy was partly fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." The attitude of the body has nothing to do with true prayer. Bending the knees every night and morning will not make a praying soul. I do believe many a painted hypocrite and many a false professor, who do bend their knees in a form of prayer, will go to hell. I have had to pray sometimes standing, sitting and walking. Yet I do love to bend my knees at a throne of grace when the dear Lord gives me sweet liberty in prayer.

I remember once I had been labouring hard to make my calling and election sure. I felt sure that if the Almighty had called me by grace, He had also elected me to life and salvation; but, I thought, "How am I to know this?" "Why," it was suggested to me, "Go and ask the minister; he alone can tell you." I started to go to the minister's home to ask him whether he thought I was a child of God. I thought I would stand or fall by his judgment; but when on my way to his house, the Lord stopped me with these words: "Trust not in man, nor make flesh thy arm, whose heart departeth from the Lord." I went no further, but turned back covered with shame, and filled with guilt and confusion.

In this state of adversity I had to consider. "O," thought I, "what have I been doing? Why, I have been trying to put my trust in a poor, fallen son of Adam, who will call me a child of God today, and tomorrow, if I offend him, he will perhaps say I am a child of the devil." I had to prove this from the mouth of this same minister some time afterwards. The Almighty made me to reprove him respecting his conduct and the errors he held and published.

My daily concern was to know whether the Lord had called me by grace. O with what anxiety did I sit and listen to the minister when he traced out the experience of God's people; I wished to know if I had any part or lot with them. Sometimes I could say with Ruth, "This people shall be my people, and their God my God." I felt with Manoah and his wife, if God had meant to destroy me, He would not have shown me these things.

Some may say, "What had He shown you?" He had truly shown me my lost state as a sinner, that I deserved nothing but hell, because I had violated His law in every part and refused all good instruction. I had defied God to His face. I knew that, by the deeds of the law no flesh living could be saved. I felt myself to be a sinner of no ordinary magnitude. The length, breadth, height and depth of the sins I went into I can never tell.

In the days of His flesh Jesus said to those who were self-righteous that He came to call sinners, not those who were righteous in their own eyes. I was made to feel that the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; whereby we draw nigh to God through the rent veil of Christ's flesh; so that we may have true fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Faith was given me to feel everything was settled and made sure in the covenant of grace from all eternity, that nothing could be taken from it, nor anything added to it. God showed me the immutability of His will from these words: "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." "Every good and every perfect gift ... cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." "O!" I thought, "Is there no change in Him? Cannot He have mercy upon me? Now I am willing to be saved; if He does not save me, how can He be a merciful God?" I knew not that He was a just as well as a merciful God in trinity and unity. The undivided essence of the Godhead cannot save one soul at the expense of an injured justice. The justice of God holds the sinner as a debtor till Christ comes and puts in His claim. Jesus paid the law to its utmost; justice asked no more; and justice then the sinner dismissed, and then sheathed its flaming sword.

I had hard thoughts of God. I arraigned the Almighty at the bar of human reason. I condemned Him for not allowing me to be my own judge, and for making a law that I could not fulfil. I thought God was a hard Master to serve. Rebellion and self-pity took possession of my soul, and I began to pity the reprobate and the ungodly. In my heart I said, "How hard for a poor man who has to work hard all his life, has no comforts here, is moral, and does no harm to his fellow-creatures, that he is to be judged and condemned as a law breaker, an enemy to God, and to be cast into hell with all the nations that forget God." Yes, it is even so; for the Lord has spoken it. I do know that this poor man, let him be whom he may, is as great an enemy to the sovereignty of God as the devil himself. The carnal heart is enmity to God; it is not subject to the law of God. If God leaves man to his own choice, he chooses the wrong way. The Lord says, "They have chosen death rather than life!" They will not come unto Me that they might have life: "We will not have this Man to reign over us."

This is the language of the carnal heart, which I know to be true. As I have stated, in my unregenerated state I was an awful blasphemer. At one time, when an ungodly person rebuked me, such was the enmity of my heart that I said I should go to hell in spite of God. I speak it to my shame and feel humbled whilst doing so, although twenty-four years have

passed since then. "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" Blessed be God, He made me willing to be saved in His way, and put a cry into my soul for a crumb of mercy. O what a monster of sin and iniquity I felt myself when the Holy Spirit shone into my heart with life-giving power! Truly I then wondered that I was out of hell. As the psalmist says, "Thou hast shewed Thy people hard things: Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment."

I loved the truth, although I was often condemned by it. Being a fisherman, I have often crept into the hinder part of the little ship and there poured out my soul in humble prayer to Almighty God to have mercy upon me, to deliver me from hell and the bondage of the law; that Christ might be revealed to me the hope of glory; so that I might be a free man in Zion. My soul longed and panted to cry, "Abba, Father!" "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Another freedom I longed for was to be enabled to open my mouth in public prayer; but this I could never do till the Lord set my soul at liberty and enabled me to be a partaker of the ordinances of His house. One Lord's day, I well remember, after the morning service there was such a feeling came over me that I was only a wayside hearer, that, being alone in my house, I shut the door. The Bible was on the table; when I fell on my knees, and earnestly begged of the Lord, if it could be consistent with His holy will, that I might open the Bible upon something to suit my feelings. I poured out my soul before the Lord, rose from my knees, and opened the Bible upon Psalm 130: "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice: let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope." These words fitted so sweetly into my soul that I felt if this was the feeling of David's soul, who was a man after God's own heart, they were also my feelings; and I did hope that David's Lord was my Lord.

I felt such a love to David's Lord that I began to think my deliverance was near. I felt liberty in my soul, so that I could talk with God as a man would with a familiar friend. I could call Him Lord and tell Him I hoped He had done something for my soul more than He had done for the world at large. I can truly say the words of this psalm were like apples of gold in pictures of silver; my soul did eat of this fruit and I found it sweet to my taste.

The Holy Ghost led me to examine the work over again; when I found I could not call Him *my* Lord and *my* God. The little word *my* I

could not say; my faith began to give way, hope lost her anchor-hold, doubts and fears prevailed. Then I found David's words suitable, "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning." When I have been at sea I know well what it is to watch for the morning light, especially when looking for some headland or harbour of refuge. I have often strained every nerve to catch a glimpse of land; what an earnest looking there has been with me, and when seen, hope has sprung up that we should reach it. The wise man says, "Blessed is the man," not *may be*, but *is* blessed, who, with a waiting, watching, loving spirit, watcheth daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors; for "whoso findeth Me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord."

Habakkuk says, "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved." I had to go many days in the strength of this meat.

I do not remember having another token of divine favour till the Lord delivered my soul from the law, curse and condemnation, and brought me into the liberty of the gospel, which was not long after.

(To be continued)

BOOK REVIEWS

The Life of Arthur W. Pink, by Iain H. Murray; hardback; 350 pages; price £13.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is a much enlarged edition of the 1981 *The Life of Arthur W. Pink*, well written and beautifully produced.

When we reviewed the original book, we wrote: "This is a book which would have been much better never published." Though we have enjoyed reading this new publication, after careful thought our opinion is the same.

Why? We greatly admire many of Mr. Pink's works and have read them with much profit. We also believe he was a godly man who sought to walk in the narrow way which leads to heaven. But he could get on with no one, and virtually ended his days as a recluse, meeting with none of God's people.

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952) lived in England, Australia, the U.S.A., and Scotland. For a short period he preached, but most of his time was spent editing *Search the Scriptures*. Brought up a Congregationalist, he separated from the American Fundamentalists and the Brethren. Then, after a time with the Strict Baptists, he left them because they did not accept the "free offer." Going to Scotland, he felt he could not worship with either the Free Church of Scotland or the Free Presbyterians. To use his own words, he wrote:

"If there are any 'churches' which are scriptural in their membership, in their maintenance of discipline, in their preaching, and in all that concerns their public services, we do not know where to find them. We have travelled round the world ... but there is no church known to us where we could hold membership."

Two things seem sad. He lived for a time in Brighton but, when he attended the ministry of J.K. Popham, Iain Murray says that "the air of fatalism chilled him." But here were two men: one who, after fifty years in the pastorate, was still preaching to hundreds; the other, having concluded a few extremely brief pastorates, unable to hold any, and now giving up preaching.

Then the last twelve years of his life Mr. Pink lived in Stornaway, Isle of Lewis, at the time Kenneth MacRae exercised his God-honouring ministry. Yet it seems incredible the two never even met.

Let us not be misunderstood. A.W. Pink's personal life was singularly spiritual and free from worldliness; but surely there is something wrong with a man who is always "the only one right"?

Giving Mr. Pink the benefit of the doubt on many things, why, when his faithful followers in Australia separated from a Strict Baptist church to form a church *exactly as he himself desired*, did he very shortly afterwards leave them, unable to continue?

One point especially we cannot understand Banner of Truth re-printing from the 1981 edition: Mr. Pink's suspicion of William Huntington because "such large crowds attended his preaching – bad sign!"

Again, we would emphasise that we have found much profit from reading A.W. Pink's works, as we know many of our readers have. But we feel it would be better for him to be remembered by his fine writings, and to have let his eccentricities and faults lie forgotten in oblivion.

The Gospel Offer is Free, by David H.J. Gay; paperback; 178 pages; price £5.00 including postage; published by Brachus, 2a Banks Road, Biggleswade, Beds., SG18 0DY, and obtainable from the publisher.

This is a book with which we do not agree!

But we wonder *why* yet another book in defence of "the free offer of the gospel" is needed. We were interested to read that many who *believe* the "free offer" do not *preach* it. We wonder why.

It would take a book of equal size to combat the author's arguments. But we are not convinced.

1. We still stand on the same ground: that we have no mention of an *offer* of Christ in Scripture. The only offer to a sinner is when God offered David the choice of three kinds of punishment. (Spurgeon is lavishly quoted in this book. But did he "offer" Christ to sinners? We know he gave an open call to repentance and to believe on the Son of God; but "offering Christ" did not seem to be in his vocabulary).

2. Of course, the Westminster Confession used the word "offer" ("so freely offered in the gospel") but we think the word "offer" has tended to change its meaning. The Reformers, Puritans and Scottish divines were very "Latin" in their thinking; and we remember at school, if we translated the Latin word "offerre" as "offer," it was marked wrong! It meant "set before."

There is a chapter on Isaiah 45. 22: "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." But this is not an "offer," and surely "the ends of the earth" can be spoken of as sinners who feel left out or far off – not necessarily "every person without exception."

John Berridge (who in other places is quoted at some length) certainly takes it in this way in his beautiful paraphrase of the closing verses of Isaiah 45:

"Ye dying souls, that sit
In darkness and distress,
Look from the borders of the pit
To My recovering grace."

And David understood it in this sense: "From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee" (Psa. 61. 2).

We very much disagree with the second half of the book: Mr. Gay's assertion that though according to His eternal decrees, only the elect will be saved, yet God desires the salvation of all without exception. We agree that there are many paradoxes in the Bible, and many things that we do not understand, but we *cannot* see that there can be any utter contradictions. "The Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us ... was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea" (2 Cor. 1. 19).

We appreciate the courteous way in which Mr. Gay has written, and also that he *never* tries to set up some monster of his own devising – an exaggerated position which no one has ever held or even thought – and then hurl stones at it. Sadly many have spoiled their arguments by doing this.

As an aside, all the recent books against those who do not hold the "free offer" have merely mentioned the Strict Baptists and William Huntington. But the eminent vicar Dr. Robert Hawker (1753-1827) enjoyed great blessing and a numerous following, and throughout the nineteenth century there were many "non-offer" ministers in the Established Church, who held to Hawker's position, and who were in a greater or less measure used by the Spirit of God in the salvation of sinners. We wonder why they and "the doctor" are never mentioned.

Baptism: Archaeological, Historical, Biblical, by F.M. Buhler; paperback; 88 pages; price £7.50; published by Joshua Press, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

The author of this book is an aged French minister, for many years pastor of the evangelical baptist church in Mulhouse. Along with his pastorate he was deeply involved in archaeology – and so has two-fold credentials to write on such a subject. Though translated from French, the book is easy to read.

We have never read a book just like this. We found it interesting, profitable and unusual.

The author deals with the subject of baptism from three different standpoints.

1. Archaeological. Being an expert in this field, M. Buhler has collected evidence that the first baptisteries were large and deep, obviously made so for complete immersion. There are several most interesting photographs. Over the years, from early mediaeval times, the baptisteries became smaller and shallower,

reflecting the change from baptism by immersion to baptism by pouring or sprinkling.

2. Historical. M. Buhler traces the change in the style of baptism as along with a change from baptizing only believers, till, in the end, baptizing everyone. (It was even punishable by death, under Charlemagne, to refuse to have a baby baptized). There are various charts to illustrate these changes.

3. Biblical. The author clearly shows the real purpose of baptism in the New Testament – not a sacrament, not cleansing from sin, not conveying grace, but the believer's open profession of death to his old life and a desire to walk in newness of life – death, burial, resurrection. So originally the church consisted of true believers alone, baptized by immersion on a confession of their faith.

There is a call to return to the original pattern of Holy Scripture, which even the Reformers failed to follow.

This is an extremely useful book.

GOD LEADS

I know not *where* His ways may lead –
 O'er rugged hill or plain;
 But this I know – He chose this path
 For my eternal gain.

I know not *when* things will occur –
 Though oft I fain would know;
 But God in love the future veils
 From mortals here below.

I know not *how* my gracious Lord
 Will answer many a prayer;
 But this I know – ah, blessed thought!
 The answer will be there!

I know not *why* things oft must be;
 No reason can I see;
 God in His own time will reveal
 His purposes to me.

God holds my hand, He leads the way;
 O may I walk by faith each day!

Author Unknown

The humble, the simple-hearted, the tempted and tried, the afflicted, the broken in heart and contrite in spirit, are not these the choicest of the Lord's precious jewels? And why? Because they are more like Christ, more conformed to His image, more manifesting the power of His grace.

J.C. Philpot

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
APRIL 2005

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

“COME NOW”

*Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at Ebenezer Chapel, Clapham,
London, on Wednesday evening, December 14th, 1966.*

Text: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa. 1. 18).

This remarkable prophecy has a great many references to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His ultimate appearance in human flesh; to His coming in the fulness of time to fulfil the will of His Father to send Him, and to redeem His church and deliver her from the bondage of the law and the terrible curse under which she lay because of her guilty condition; to provide a righteousness so that she shall be presented without spot; and all to redound to the glory of God in a manifestation of His infinite wisdom, mercy and grace in the recovery of poor, lost, ruined sinners from the Adam fall, and to make their standing in Christ far more secure than was their standing in Adam. As we look through this blessed prophecy, we can observe the Lord’s appointments in all these particulars that were then yet to be fulfilled. If we have faith to view this and to look back upon the fulfilment of all that is here indicated, we may have great cause to bless God for His mercy and for His gospel, and so to be satisfied with that provision of salvation, to want nothing else beside it for our poor, perishing souls, and if we have felt that, to wait too for a sweet renewing of it in our own hearts.

The verse I have read has been upon my mind today. As you can see, it has both an invitation and a promise. The invitation is to come and reason together. This is what the Lord says: “Come now, and let us reason together.” What amazing condescension is this on the part of the Majesty of heaven, to invite poor, guilty people to come and reason with Him! There is something more than an invitation; there is one of many very blessed promises of the result of this and what the Lord Himself would say to these poor reasoning people. He says, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” I have been thinking today that the two great things that concern us are *sin* and *salvation* – to know our sins forgiven; to feel that these scarlet-dyed sins, these double-stained sins are washed away so that not a stain remains, not a speck. “They shall be as white as snow.”

What is remarkable about this verse is that it seems to stand by itself, to be distinct, not necessarily connected with what goes before or what follows. It stands forth like a shining light in the midst of the dark background here recorded, of the conduct of the people, of their forgetfulness of God and in consideration of their not showing the gratitude of a beast who does respond to his master's voice. "But Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider" (verse 3). Then there is their completely corrupted condition. "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (verse 6). Well, might we not conclude that a people in such a condition might be justly banished and punished for their sins without any promise of mercy? There seems also to be such sacrilege. Their services appear to have been hypocritical; although they went through some performance, yet their heart was not in it. "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth; they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them" (verses 13, 14).

How profoundly solemn is all this! Consider the position of the people, their general conduct. In those days we know there were godly people, there were many who feared God and desired to serve Him; but here is the sacrilege of the feasts, the base conduct of the people generally speaking. It seems to describe our present condition with all the vanity and worldliness and forgetfulness of God and His Word and His ways, sacrilege and mockery under the cloak of religion; all the ritual and things that must be dishonouring in the sight of a holy God.

Yet a word like this seems to shine forth and burst through the black cloud like a voice from heaven. It seems a remarkable statement to make, and is in a way in parenthesis. We could read the verse before and that which follows and they would be quite well connected. The Lord warned them of the consequences of their sins and exhorted them to sanctify themselves and humble themselves before Him as a people; but even so this amazing promise bursts forth in the midst of all this, in the forgiveness of sins. This appears to be a striking feature in the prophecy of Isaiah.

In this chapter the Lord solemnly reproves them for their guilty condition, and yet momentarily breaks forth like this: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Here is the freeness of God's grace and mercy, and the superabounding of His grace over the abounding of sin. He hates sin, but here is the invitation: "Come now, and let us reason together."

I have been looking at these two words, “Come now.” It does not say, “Come ye,” or, “Come thou,” or, “Come sometime,” but “Come *now*.” This appears to be a matter that should have no delay; now is the day of salvation; “Come *now*.” This is the Lord’s invitation, and we have this in a number of places, as you know. The Lord Himself said in the days of His flesh, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” There are a number of invitations to poor, needy, sensible sinners who venture before the mercy seat to “come now.” Why come *now*? Because of the urgency of the matter, because of the greatness and importance of it and because of the consequences and ultimate result of living and dying unforgiven. Come *now*; lose no time; no matter is as important as the salvation of a sinner’s soul.

“Come now, and let us reason together.” This coming is the venturing of faith, as it was in the case of the Syrophenician woman who came to the Lord Jesus to plead with Him. The apostle says, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” “Come now.” This is a point to notice: the throne of grace is open, and open night and day to those who knock by the way. “Come now.” This is drawing nigh, as it is said in Psalm 73, “It is good for me to draw near to God.” It is good for me; he found it to be so.

“Come now” then, come now, repenting sinner; come, approach this throne of grace; come with all your sin and guilt and ruin and misery and death. “Come now, and let us reason together.” And what can be said about this reasoning? How can a guilty sinner reason with a holy God, one who is separate from Him on account of sin? In view of the merciful invitation we are warranted to venture near, to come to the throne of grace; but what can we plead, how can we enter into this debate? The Lord says, “plead together,” as though He would say, “You say what you have to say and then I will say what I have to say. Let us plead together.” It is an invitation. Here is an opening of the mouth for the dumb.

But what can we plead with the Lord, what can we reason with Him? It is perfectly true that on our part we cannot plead anything good of ourselves; we cannot take something which we may think to merit the favour of God as, to use an illustration, Naaman did when he went to Elisha to be cured of his leprosy. He took with him a substantial present and hoped that he might obtain favour with the prophet with all that he had brought to load him with; but that was to no purpose whatever. “Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean,” cleansed of thy leprosy. Not, O what wonderful presents! I can do no other than pronounce you clean.

Yet there is that in a poor sinner to want to take something that he may think will please the Lord, something that may seem to have some

merit in it. We cannot plead acceptably upon that ground; we have no good works to plead to merit the favour of God. Good as good works are as the fruit of His grace, and love to Him, we have to come to this mercy seat and plead our own unworthiness, our guilty condition, that we have nothing but sin, that our best is stained and dyed with sin, that our all is nothing worth. So we have no argument from that point of view.

We find Job saying, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat! I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments." But they could not be arguments of his own goodness, for he had to come down to this, to repent in dust and ashes and to say, "Behold, I am vile." No, we cannot plead our own goodness, or strength, or merit, or anything of that kind. All we can plead is our guilt and sin and need. Let us plead together.

From another point of view there *is* something that a poor, guilty, helpless wretch can plead. What can he plead? He can plead the blood of Christ as a healing balm for the wounds of his sin. He can plead in this debate what the Lord has promised, and that the Lord Himself has said, "Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified." The Lord Himself can say to such an one in pleading with Him or debating with Him, with all this guilt and sin, that there is no reason why he should keep away from Him, but all the more reason why such an one should venture in humble confession and plead for mercy. There is something to plead; not anything in ourselves to merit the Saviour's esteem, but there is a blessed gospel to plead, there is a divine promise to plead, there is the Lord's own Word to plead. There is that to plead which faith may hold Him to, and He Himself has said, "Put Me in remembrance," say all you have to say. "Let us plead together."

There is also the power and wisdom and grace of Christ to plead. He has said that none shall be turned away who venture in faith. This coming to the Lord is really believing in Him. "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.... Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." Never will the Lord turn one away. There is no Scripture to confirm that He will, for He has said, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." Here is something to plead. What a wonderful mercy it is! With all our guilt and vileness we have something to plead, and we have the atonement to plead, we have His own word that He will not cast us away, we have His own invitation to plead. "Let us plead together," as though the Lord would say you can be quite free to make all the confessions that you feel necessary or to remind Me of whatever you feel desirable. "Let us plead together."

“Let us reason together.” The reasoning here appears to be based upon the matter of forgiveness. Now what does the Lord have to say about this? Is it not remarkable what the Lord says in response to the reasoning of a poor sinner who ventures to that throne of grace to reason with the Lord? I take this to be the reasoning of faith, the argument of faith; this is not carnal reasoning but it is the exercise of faith upon Christ. It is a bold venture, taking no denial. As one says:

“I can no denial take
When I plead for Jesus’ sake.”

The reasoning is centering in the blessed mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ; for His name’s sake, that is it, that is the point that we come to with all our reasoning, for His name’s sake, and no other ground but this.

What does the Lord say in response to all this? He says, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” He goes straight to the point; no going round about it, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” This is the Lord’s reasoning. O what condescending grace is this! This is not upon the grounds of the law or upon the grounds of abstract justice, for if the Lord only reasoned upon that ground, He could do no other than banish us for ever from His presence. If I may put it like this, it is not to the throne of justice that a poor, venturing sinner goes to reason with the Lord. It is not before the throne of His justice, for no mercy can be shown there under the law; the terms of that are “Do and live, sin and die,” that is the law. The throne that a poor, guilty wretch ventures to is the throne of grace, the mercy seat that was sprinkled with the blood when the high priest went in once every year. The blood-stained mercy seat is the place of meeting. It is the place of meeting where the Lord comes and has contact with a sinner. The mercy seat – this is where the two parties plead together. Here it was that the Lord said, “There will I commune with thee.” There will I meet with thee.

Have mercy upon me for Christ’s sake, for Christ’s sake; that is the argument you venture to use, which the Lord will never turn away. He will never turn away one who comes seeking mercy for Jesus’ sake. He does not belittle sin, “though your sins be as scarlet.” That is of the deepest dye. Though they be as scarlet and red like crimson – it does not say just a faint mark, but as scarlet. They are deep, double-dyed sins; this indicates the heinousness of them, they are deep-dyed sins. Yet even so, although this is true, and it is enough to close the mouth apart from the precious blood of Christ, here is the promise: “They shall be as white as snow,” and “they shall be as wool.”

This indicates the complete removal of every stain, every mark, every spot. “They shall be as white as snow.” This appears to indicate

the complete removal of guilt, so that this guilty person stands before God pardoned and cleansed and justified with nothing between. If the Lord brings an experience of pardon into your heart this will be one of the effects: there will be nothing between you and your God. It will fill you with peace. You will know something about what dear Watts says where he writes of the blessed atonement of Jesus Christ and its sufficiency:

“It rises high, and drowns the hills;
Has neither shore nor bound;
Now if we search to find our sins,
Our sins can ne’er be found.”

“White as snow,” *white as snow*, not a sin to be found, not a blot, not a stain! This takes us to Psalm 51 and the prayer of the Psalmist: “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” Not, I shall still have a few stains left, but, “I shall be whiter than snow.”

“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” This does not mean that our poor flesh is made perfect in ourselves, but we are perfect in Christ. But notice at what a tremendous cost is this wonderful cleansing. Our sins are as scarlet, red like crimson, but nothing less than that red, flowing blood from the Redeemer’s sacred side can cleanse these crimson sins. Blood must flow, that red, rich stream of blood must flow to wash this load of guilt away and wash away the stain. One says of the stream,

“What stream is that which sweeps away
My sins just like a flood,
Nor lets one guilty, blemish stay?
’Tis Jesus’ precious blood.”

Nothing else can.

This means not only or simply that we are forgiven, but justified. “That thou mightest be justified.” The perfection of His obedience, the obedience of Christ, is the argument of faith for this robe of righteousness to be put upon us to cover us so that there is not a sin that can be seen; all is hidden from the eye of justice. It is a great word in itself. It is a blessed word. It is a word that may bring hope into the heart of a despairing one who has nothing of his own to plead. One who is made sensible of his guilt and sin may venture to the throne of mercy like this:

“Just as I am without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me.”

Amen.

GOD'S STANDARD OF EXPERIENCE, NOT MAN'S

From a letter by J.C. Philpot written in 1840

I felt much interested in your account of your trip to Plymouth. You need not have felt such trepidation at calling on my mother and sister, as they are plain people, and would be glad to see any friend of mine. I am glad you liked my sister's conversation. Whatever others may think I care not. I myself fully receive it as a divine work, and those who doubt or disbelieve it, let them produce a better. I mean as to the feelings produced by a visit from Jesus; and if any cavil, and say there was not *this* preparatory work, and *that* preliminary hell and damnation terrors, all I can say is, "Who shall limit the Holy One of Israel?" As Hart says in his golden "Preface" – in my opinion the most weighty piece of writing ever penned by man after the blessed Scriptures – "The dealings of God with His people, though similar in the general, are nevertheless so various that there is no chalking out the paths of one child of God by those of another; no laying down regular plans of Christian conversion, Christian experience, Christian usefulness, or Christian conversation.

I heartily assent to what I have thus quoted, and though I believe there is no revelation of Christ without previous condemnation by the law, who shall define the necessary degree of depth, or the indispensable period of length? Who shall take the compasses and scale, and mark out a circle for the Almighty to move in, or a line to walk by? Let the measurer first cut and clip all the trees of the forest into a certain prescribed figure and uniform symmetry. Let him examine an unknown leaf from some Indian forest and say, "This is not a leaf at all; it is not jagged nor scalloped like the only leaf I admit as my standard – that of the oak; and therefore I cast it from me as a base counterfeit, a vile imitation, the work of some ingenious artist." You would say to such a critic in vain, "Why look, sir, is it not green? Does it not spring from a branch? Does it not fulfil all the functions of a leaf? Does it not, by its minute pores and vessels, give out all the superfluous moisture of the sap, and at the same time inhale the oxygen of the air, which, by combining with the sap, becomes nutriment to the tree?" Still he would answer, "I don't care what it does. I say it is not jagged nor scalloped, nor like an oak leaf, and therefore away with it!"

Apply this to the case in hand. I believe my sister has not felt the terrors of the law, as many have; but if she felt lost, guilty, condemned, without hope or help, she had a work of the law in her conscience. But I look more to the deliverance and the effects produced by it. Who shall say in reading her simple statement that her leaf is not green? Does it not give out and take in, as the leaf does – give out the flowings of love and contrition, and take in out of the fulness of the Saviour?

Deliverances, my friend, are the grand evidences to look to. No other evidences will satisfy a needy, naked soul, and they are what a wise man will chiefly look to in estimating others. He will not, indeed, pass by, or think lightly of the sighing of the prisoner, but he will consider the knocking off the fettered captive's chains a better evidence than his lying in the dungeon. And whatever some may think about the most searching ministry being that which deals chiefly with dark evidences, I have not the least doubt that that ministry will be the most cutting, and at the same time the most establishing, which deals most in deliverances. This is a very different thing from the flighty, dry-letter ministry of preaching assurance and comfort.

Deliverances imply trials, sorrows and temptations. Troubles and deliverances are the scales of a balance; when one is up the other is down. But they who are all for darkness and unbelief have no balance, but a scale-pan detached from the beam; and they who are all for assurance have the other scale unhooked from the beam also. They are thieves and deceitful weighers, who have stolen the scale and left the beam behind them; and being partners in the robbery, one rogue has taken away one scale and his accomplice the other. The honest man holds the beam with the scales attached to it, and he puts the light-hearted and untempted into the scale of trials. They cannot make it move a peg; they are found wanting. He then puts the mourners into the scale of deliverances. The beam trembles, but does not move. It is worldly sorrow that works death. They are light weight too. But a living soul tempted will at one time weigh down one scale, and a living soul delivered will at another time weigh down the other scale, and thus be full weight in each.

The apostle says of himself, "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do"; and again, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." Such were the complaints of this man of God, the highly-favoured vessel of mercy and ambassador of peace and salvation. He was not a saint, in the Popish and Protestant-Popish sense of the word, that is, a man universally and perfectly holy, one elevated, as it were, on a pedestal above human passions and creature infirmities. But he was a saint in the only true and scriptural sense, i.e., one sanctified by God the Father, and separated in His eternal decree, sanctified by God the Son when He bought him with His own precious blood, and sanctified by God the Holy Ghost when He regenerated him and made him a new creature in Christ Jesus. And one evidence of his being thus sanctified was that he groaned in the body, being burdened. Sin was, in him, an indwelling principle which continually put itself forth in thoughts, words and actions, contrary to that new, living and holy principle which the blessed Spirit had implanted. So that not absence of sin, but the groaning of the living soul under it, is the evidence of saintship.

J.C. Philpot

SPIRITUAL DECLENSION (1)

To E.M.

Much-beloved in Jesus, In His ever-fragrant name I desire again to commune with you in Him and of Him; that in so doing He may be exalted, and our hearts caused anew to burn with His love, which is the source of ours, His being the cause, ours the effect. It is self-evident that the more we have to do with the cause, the more freely effects will flow. Hence our dear Lord says, "Continue ye in My love" (John 15. 9); not thereby implying that His love can be turned away from its objects, but exhorting us to a continued realisation or apprehending of His love by the lively acting of a Spirit-wrought faith. Thus will our little spark be increasing into a flame by constant communication with the fire from whence it springs.

Of this communication, *faith* seems to be the medium; and if this precious grace be not kept in healthy exercise upon the Person and work, the sufferings and death, the blood and righteousness of our dear Redeemer, the soul will be sure to become languid and drooping in its spiritual condition. Prayer, praise, love, joy, peace, and all other graces will be at a low-water mark; and whatever external appearances or profession there may be, the heart will be conscious of distance and shyness with its Lord.

You know I am speaking of one who has been quickened by the Spirit, and is a living soul, for we may be alive but not lively. We may be active in our Lord's cause, but not spiritual in our own souls. We may be earnest for the salvation of others, but not be living in the joys of salvation ourselves. We may be instrumentally distributing the bread and water of life, but not be enjoying daily refreshment therefrom in our own experience. I do sorrowfully think that this is too much the case in the present day, according to that scripture, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept." May we not say, as our Lord did upon another subject, "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone"?

The reason why I thus judge is from finding persons so lively in conversing upon what they are doing for the Lord, yet so slow to speak of what He is doing for them. They seem delighted to tell of the great things which are doing all around, but immediately shrink back if any heart-subject is brought home to them. In fact, if one speaks of personal enjoyment of the love, blood and salvation of Jesus, there is no response from some, but they put it down to the score of egotism; while others refer to years gone by when they did feel Him to be precious, but they confess that they know little of it now. They are so occupied in what they call working for Him, that they hear little from Him, say little to

Him, enjoy little of Him, and may truly say, "While I was busy here and there He was gone."

It is most lamentable for any living soul to be in constant religious engagements for the good of others, while following Jesus "afar off." Very many such I fear there are, as well as hundreds who only know Him in the judgment, and yet are continually reading, teaching and conversing in His blessed name. This is a day of great profession, but yet real vital godliness is at a low ebb, and close walking with God in sweet communion is too little sought after. Solemn, indeed, are these facts. We may well say, with David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

You will not much wonder that I have been led into this train of thought, because we have more than once touched upon the subject in conversation; and indeed, dearest friend, I feel more and more the deep importance of being kept in a freshness of experience by the anointings of the Spirit; so that whatever engagements we may have for the good of others, and however abundantly we may be labouring for their salvation, there should still be a constant communication kept up with our dear Lord, and our souls should never rest satisfied without freedom at Court.

To be constantly employed in errands for the King and never to see His face, hear His voice, or receive a token from Him, O how chilling to one who has enjoyed His love, has sat under His shadow with great delight, and has found His fruit sweet to the taste! How unsatisfying to one truly longing to taste that the Lord is gracious! The former may well say, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation," and the latter, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people: O visit me with Thy salvation!" When we are enjoying personal intercourse with the King, and by faith walking in Him and living on Him, then will His messages be most warmly delivered, being fresh from Himself. Then will there be evidently a sweet savour of Him, as well as a good word for Him.

I cannot tell you how sad it is to my heart when I find this savour wanting in some who have been long in the Lord's ways, and active in serving Him too. They are cumbered with many things, and too little alone with Jesus, without which we shall become like salt which has lost its savour. It makes me mourn for them and tremble for myself, thinking of some passages which have often brought me to great searchings of heart and wrestlings with the Lord: Matt. 5. 13; Hos. 10. 2, "Their heart is divided, now shall they be found faulty"; and much of Jer. 2, and also Rev. 2. 4, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." It matters not what great works there be if the spice of love be wanting.

O may our gracious Lord bring us closer and closer to Himself, and cause us to dwell in love, and “to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” May He fill us with the Spirit, that by His power we may so testify of what we taste and hear and see, that other hearts may be kindled with desire to enjoy the same blessed fellowship, even as the beloved apostle said: “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” He desired that they might have joy in the Lord; and the kingdom of God is not in word but in power; it is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

These are things with which the stranger to God intermeddleth not, for such have only to do with the outworks, but “the kingdom of God is within you”; and “we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire.”

O what an unspeakable mercy that by the spirit of adoption we can say, “our God,” and “our Father”; and though He be a consuming fire to those on whom sin is found, yet hath He made for us a “way of escape” by the blood of our Elder Brother, having laid upon Him all our iniquities. These briars and thorns were set against Him in battle, and on His sacred Person did the fire of divine justice burn them up altogether. O let us turn aside from creature things and see this great sight, for it is heart-warming and Christ-endearing to see the bush of humanity in that devouring fire, and yet unconsumed; to behold our precious Surety enduring all the bitter anguish till every sin of His chosen was expiated, and He could triumphantly say, “It is finished.” That was indeed “the conqueror’s song,” and with joy it is re-echoed again and again from the believing heart by the power of the blessed Spirit: “It is finished, and finished for me.” The personality of it is the sweetness; here is food for faith, here is a feast for love. In such believing views of a crucified Saviour we get raised above the things of a dying world; and in realising by faith our union with Him we can say, “I am crucified with Christ”; then He becomes our life, that we which live should henceforth live only for Him (2 Cor. 5. 14, 15).

This is a heart-warming subject, but I must cease. May we have more and more experience of it in the heart, and never be left to rest in the mere “talk of the lips,” which “tendeth only to penury” of soul. There is a talking of Christ which is impoverishing; that is, when the lips outrun the heart. But when He is dwelling there by faith, and causing His Naphtali to give goodly words of Him (Gen. 49. 21), in such scattering there is increasing; He is honoured and the soul refreshed.

O may He pour out His Spirit upon His people to quicken the dead, and arouse the living who may be in a sleepy state of soul, who need their lamps trimming and their loins girding afresh. May there be great searchings of heart, causing the inquiry, Why, being a King's child, should there be leanness from day to day? Is there not a cause? Is there not bread enough in the Father's house? Or rather, has there not been a turning away from His spiritual provision to some beggarly elements of the creature or the world?

May the Lord in mercy restore all such to their first love, and also lead them on to those more blessed revelations of Himself which are to be enjoyed even in the house of our pilgrimage. I will yet be inquired of by the house of Israel, saith the Lord of Hosts, to do it for them. The Lord ever bless you with sweet and close communion with Himself.

A warm adieu, with tender love, from your ever affectionate

Ruth Bryan

High Pavement, Nottingham, February 1856

ABIGAIL

From F.W. Krummacher's The Life of David

David (1) falls into a new and severe temptation; yet (2) through the grace of God he is once more gloriously helped out of it. These are the two facts in his history which now claim our attention. Let us examine them particularly.

I.

We have arrived at the year 1026 before the birth of Christ. A great man in Israel has just disappeared from the scene of earth, a man of the highest influence among all the people, and equally beloved, and esteemed, and venerated. Samuel has closed his eyes upon this world. After he had, by the change of Israel into a kingdom, been released from the responsibilities of a judge, he still maintained the cause and honour of Jehovah in his fatherland as a prophet and priest. About a year ago or more, the Lord had permitted him to withdraw from the sphere of public life, and to enjoy the evening of his days amid the peaceful quietness of the colony of beloved brethren which he had established at Ramah. Elsewhere he was but seldom seen. Nevertheless it was a consolation to thousands that he still at least tarried among the living. It was as if a mild, beneficent light streamed forth from that noble star over the whole of Israel, so long as he yet, even though behind a veil of clouds, irradiated the horizon of the Holy Land.

That star in Israel was now quenched. In the seventieth year of his age, he calmly departed amid the circle of his beloved disciples, "the sons

of the prophets" pouring forth their hearts in thank-offerings and in prayers to God. Weeping sore for their loss, his young friends at Ramah laid him in his grave. Very many felt themselves, in the then disordered condition of the kingdom, as if made orphans by his death, and among these David was not the least.

As our Lord once, after the tidings of the departure of His forerunner and friend John had been brought to Him, withdrew in silence into a lonely desert, so David also, when the sorrowful news from Ramah reached him, withdrew with his followers into the quiet, uninhabited desert of Paran, which at the present day is called El-Tyh, and where, according to the report of a recent traveller, the view stretches out on all sides over a mournful wilderness in which not a single tree, nor bush, nor green blade of grass refreshes the eye, and where only here and there a streak of white chalk-cliffs shimmers through the monotonous grey of the steppes and the barren hills. Here he found leisure to mourn over the death of that most excellent man of his time, and thankfully to recall to mind the greatness of the blessings which he had brought upon Israel.

The time granted him for this purpose was, however, short. He soon saw himself summoned back again to the scene of war, and this time against an enemy for whose overthrow he needed other weapons than those of steel and iron. David fell into a sore temptation. It was the prince of this world who dug for him a new ditch.

On the extreme limits of the wilderness of Paran, in a south-easterly direction from Hebron lay, in a hilly pastoral region, a little hamlet of the name of Carmel. It is now called Kurmul, where, in the water-pools hewn out of the rock and in the moss-covered heap of rubbish we have evidences of a civilisation of ancient times. Here at that time lived a wealthy husbandman and prince of flocks of the name of Nabal, a descendant of the old distinguished family of Caleb. Three thousand sheep fed on his pastures and he had a thousand goats on the surrounding mountains. His servants were a great number, and he himself was as a king in his dealings. Often did David meet on his excursions with the shepherds of this man, and he had maintained good friendship with them.

As he now needed, in the barren desert, all manner of provisions for his men, and as he could no longer reckon on its being conveyed thither from friendly circles, he considered whether Nabal might not be inclined to communicate of his abundance to his kinsmen. For this end he sent ten young men to him with a friendly salutation, and directed them to say to him in his name, "Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee. Wherefore let the

young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day" (it was the day of sheep-shearing, which was in Israel wont to be kept as a day of joy with a feast and a banquet); "give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David."

The messengers depart without delay, and at length reach Carmel, and address to Nabal the words that had been given to them. But how bitterly were they disappointed in their expectations! Nabal, "a man churlish and evil in his doings," as the narrative describes him, did not comply even so much as to return thanks for the friendly salutation which had been brought to him, but angrily and with a stern countenance said to the messengers, "Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?"

This example of rudely violated hospitality stands almost alone in Israel. In the haughtiness with which Nabal treated David's messengers may not, however, some spark of attachment to the king have had its influence? Possibly this may have been the case. But David ought not to have condescended to the flattery in which he calls himself "Nabal's son," and his armed followers "Nabal's servants"; and as little did it become him to reckon it as a particular virtue in himself and his men that they had not insulted, nor robbed, nor injured his peaceful shepherds. The scornful reply of Nabal was not therefore unmerited. Enough: the young men returned ashamed, with empty hands, to their leader, and announced to him how unsuccessful they had been.

How did David now receive their report? Did he humble himself and commend his cause to God the Lord? On the contrary, we meet him now, for the first time, not master of his own spirit, but hurried along by his natural passionateness of disposition. With a flaming anger, in which perhaps, as in that under the influence of which Moses once slew the Egyptian, a feeling prophetic of his future dignity may have formed a part, he gave forth to his men the order of the day, "Gird ye on every man his sword!" And when this was done, and he also had girded on his, namely the sword of Goliath, which the Lord had given into his hand as the spoil of victory and which, therefore, was worthy of a more honourable campaign, glowing with a spirit of revenge he led his band of four hundred armed men to the little town of Carmel, while he left two hundred behind "by the stuff."

Thus he stands before us in the act of proceeding to break the peace of the land, to seize on the possessions of strangers, and to stain himself with the blood of peaceful citizens, yea, of his own kinsmen. Surely he had not this time either prayed or inquired at the Lord by the "Urim and

Thummim.” If he had carried out what his anger suggested to him – and he did not contemplate remaining satisfied with a fruitless enterprise – he would have given the death-blow to his own honour and to his cause. Then he would have appeared before God and all the world as an outlaw: a man over whom not only his enemies would have triumphed, but who must also be given up by his *friends* as unworthy of the crown of Israel, and to whom nothing else would have remained but, as a fugitive, with the mark of Cain on his brow, to beg for protection within the limits of some heathen land.

What a precipice this to which we here see him rushing forward! We tremble for him whose whole future is now at stake. But *He* will indeed graciously interpose, who always means it infinitely better to His people than they do to themselves, and who has promised His servants and handmaidens not only deliverance from the dangers which men prepare for them, but also from such as might arise to them out of the temptations of the powers of darkness and the allurements of their own sinful nature. If David formed his resolution, so also the Lord formed His concerning him. We perceive, to our joy and comfort, what a surprising turn the affair now takes.

II.

Nabal’s wife was Abigail. The history calls her “a woman of a good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance.” That the first of these qualities belonged to her, she has given evidence. She was also a woman who feared God. When David had already begun his march towards Carmel, one of her servants came to Abigail and told her what had happened; namely, that the son of Jesse had sent messengers out of the wilderness to convey friendly salutations to Nabal her husband. But that he had answered these men, who had entreated him for food, as if they had been enemies, although they had been good friends to his shepherds in the remote regions of the wilderness, yea, had even served them as a wall of defence against the threatening bands of robbers from the countries of the heathen. “Now therefore know,” continued this servant, “and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him.” Thus the young man spake. Who recognises not in his mission the hand of that God who directeth all things?

After Abigail had listened calmly to the communications of her servant, she – the quiet and considerate housewife – very speedily discovered the course that must now be adopted. Solomon says, “Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.” Who will deny that there never have been wanting seals confirming this proverb? Seldom will a man be able to pull down so

much as a godly, intelligent wife does not build up again with ready hand. As a rule, it is the wife who puts her stamp upon the house, and not the man; and where there are children, they are wont, in most cases, to imitate their fathers less than their mothers.

Abigail hastened immediately to her storerooms, and gave direction to her servants without delay to laden several beasts of burden with two hundred loaves, two measures or skins of wine, five sheep ready dressed, and as many measures of meal, together with an abundant supply of raisins and figs, and then to drive them forward in the direction which she more particularly pointed out to them. She would herself follow them immediately, and then she would make them better acquainted with the object of their expedition. Naturally, all this was done without the knowledge of Nabal, who remained at a distance beside his flocks.

The servants departed as their mistress commanded them, and Abigail had her mule quickly bridled, and soon overtook them. The caravan, however, had not proceeded far when the armed troop, bent on revenge, came upon them, as they went along a path through the covert of the hill. David, its leader, was not yet calmed from the storm of angry passion with which we saw him set out on his march. He had just addressed his companions in these words: "Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good." It does not seem to us as if with these words David intended only to ease his conscience which, without doubt, rose up with sternest threatenings against him; for in the storm of his wild passion he thus continued, protesting with an oath: "So and more also do God unto the *enemies* of David, if I slay not all the men that pertain to Nabal, by the morning light!"

Scarcely had these inconsiderate words passed from his lips, when Abigail appeared before him, dismounted quickly from her mule, and bowing herself on her face to the ground before him, according to oriental custom, addressed him thus, with agitated heart: "Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid. Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name" (*i.e.*, fool, a word which in the Hebrew has a moral signification, and denotes a perversity, not only of the understanding, but also of the heart), "and folly" (estrangement from God) "is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send. Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the Lord hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal. And now

this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord. I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid" (of which my husband hath made himself guilty, and which, therefore, I impute to myself also): "for the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days. Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall He sling out, as out of the middle of a sling. And it shall come to pass, when the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good that He hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; that this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord" (but much more shall make thee glad), "either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid."

How affecting, and how rich in enlightened wisdom, and in tender, yea, holy tact, was this heartfelt speech! Where in the whole heathen world do we find a woman comparable to Abigail, this daughter of the wilderness of Paran? May she not be regarded as of almost equal rank with the Marys of the New Testament? It is true that she is unhappy. Ah, her house, however blessed with earthly goods, is no house of Bethany. She is constrained, with deep sorrow, to call her rude husband, hardened in the service of Mammon, "a fool." But she bears with him with patient and hopeful love and fidelity, and perhaps oftentimes raises holy hands to God for him. She appears before David on his behalf, while she takes upon herself, as a sacrificial lamb, the trespass of her husband.

But she also holds out to David the grave offence of which he would have been guilty if he had carried out his purpose against her husband. In how tender a manner, at the same time, did she signify to him that he had reason from the heart to praise the Lord his God that He had, at the right moment, and indeed by means of her, arrested him when rushing to his own destruction; and with how much tact does she also remind him that he was not yet either ruler or king, and consequently neither judge nor avenger of transgressors in Israel, when she says to him in these and in the words following: "When the Lord ... shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel?"

And how could David resist her petition for the forgiveness of her husband, after she had in so prudent a manner presented before his eyes the highest blessedness to which anyone on earth could attain; namely this, to "be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord" (*i.e.*, with those who were ordained by the Lord to eternal life); and when she then, with

the silent supposition that this dignity was his, and that he would not forfeit it through wickedness, promised to him all blessings for his future course, and then, with the well-considered expression, "Thine enemies ... shall He sling out, as out of the middle of a sling," called back to his recollection the great honour which the grace of God had already conferred upon him, especially in his victory over Goliath?

Indeed the truth and sincerity, as well as the dove-like simplicity, united with hallowed prudence, revealed in that childlike, gracious address of the excellent wife merits our liveliest admiration. Who can fail to perceive that here already the Spirit from above works mightily? Is it not almost as if in her we listened to an advanced disciple of the gospel? The words, Thou shalt "be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord," uttered long ago by the mouth of Abigail, as a favourite expression and as indicating the most precious thing on earth which any one could desire, have become naturalised in the language of the whole Christian world.

There was no need that Abigail should add to her words the prayer, "Remember thine handmaid." The impression which her address produced in the soul of David was powerful and decisive. Melted in thankful emotion at the faithfulness of his God, who in so tender a manner had restrained him, storming with passion, from a bloody crime, but not less also penetrated with shame and repentance, he stands at first dumb before the simple woman, and then, with manifest feeling, breaks out in those words: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand. For in very deed, as the Lord God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee" (*i.e.*, thine house) "except thou hadst hastened and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal, by the morning light," any living man in his house. Thus David.

Like one walking in a dream, who awakens up at the sound of his name and suddenly with horror sees himself on the brink of a giddy precipice, and overflowing with thanks towards his deliverer, retraces his steps, such was now the state of David's mind. Besides, he had learned to his humiliation, as well as also to his safety, to know one side of his temperament, which till now he had not been so clearly conscious of. As long as life lasts he will not forget this march towards Carmel. And we perhaps do not err if we suppose that what he once experienced at Carmel hovered before his soul, as often as in his Psalms, particularly in the seventeenth, the eighteenth, the thirty-seventh, and the sixty-sixth, he raised his cry to the Lord as a God who "holdeth our soul in life, and *suffereth not our feet to be moved.*"

Thankfully David received the presents which Abigail had brought for his men, and departed from her, whom the Lord had sent to him like a guardian angel, with the words, "Go up in peace to thine house: see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person."

But when Abigail, the faithful wife, returned home, alas! the whole unhappiness of her condition came again before her in the clearest light. Her husband sat at a luxurious banquet, rioting with his companions. His heart, the narrative says, "was merry within him," for he then, as always, only lived *for himself*; and "he was very drunken." Poor wife! Yet, even in the present day, and in the midst of Christianity, many of her sisters in sorrow may be found. Thus there appears before me many a sorrowful wife – a peaceful martyr, with such a cross on her weak shoulders, and yet bearing it in self-denial, and forgiving seventy times seven, but yet always anew overwhelmed by the same domestic misery! If only, *once for all*, something of that "Me and my house, we will serve the Lord!" sounded again in the heart of the husband sold under sin, an end would be put in repentance to all that distress and all that misery. "Yet continue constantly," we say to the sorely-tried wife, "to pray for the pitiable man. God knows thee, and He preserves thy secret tears in His bottle. Hope in Him, and remember the words, 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.'"

Abigail, however, experienced no such longed-for change. When on her return she found her husband in that lamentable condition, she wisely said nothing to him, "less or more, until the morning light." But so much the more, on the other hand, did she pray to God the Lord. But when the day broke and Nabal had become sober, she honestly and without reserve told him all that had happened. She hoped that this communication would produce a blessed influence on his heart, since he must indeed perceive that there had been only *one* step between him and death, and that through the protecting hand of God and the faithfulness of his wife, the evil had been averted.

But her hope deceived her. The obstinate Nabal thought himself wounded in his honour by the obliging condescension of his wife towards his enemy; and instead of a feeling of thankfulness, such a spirit of ill-humour and anger overpowered him that suddenly "his heart died within him, and he became as a stone." For ten days he lay without consciousness; then the Lord smote him a second time, and his soul departed hence, without doubt preceded by the unremitting intercession of his faithful wife, under the mighty hand of the Judge of the living and the dead.

When David received information of Nabal's death, the remembrance of the wicked deed, to which his blind, unbridled anger was hurrying him forward, came back upon him with all its strength. At

the same time, with adoring thankfulness, he thought on the divine protection of which he had been so wonderfully the object, and broke out in these words: "Blessed be the Lord, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the Lord hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head." Certainly it is – and scarcely anything else was to be expected – the stern spirit of the old covenant, of the economy of the law, and not the milder spirit of the gospel, which breathes out of this expression of thankfulness.

A considerable time had passed away after this occurrence at Carmel, when David sent messengers to Abigail, his prudent and godly deliverer, who were to speak unto her saying, "David sent us unto thee, to take thee to him to wife." Abigail, recognising in this new incident of her life the guidance of a higher hand, arose from her seat and bowed herself on her face to the earth before the messengers, as the representatives of David, and said, "Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord" – an expression this of deep humility, but arising from a true feeling of her unworthiness to be chosen as the spouse of him who would one day, as there was now no longer any room to doubt, be ruler over Israel. After she had refreshed the messengers with food and drink, and had entrusted her farm to the management of a steward, who was perhaps one of her own relations, she ordered her mule to be saddled and, by no means concealing from herself the fact that she would encounter many hardships and trials, she "went with five damsels of hers," along with the messengers of David, to the wilderness of Paran, and she became David's wife.

Krummacher concludes with a few thoughts on the wrongness of polygamy.

CHRISTIAN AT THE CROSS

From John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress

Now I saw in my dream that the highway up which Christian was to go was fenced on either side with a wall, and that wall was called Salvation (Isa. 26. 1). Up this way therefore did burdened Christian run, but not without great difficulty, because of the load on his back.

He ran thus till he came at a place somewhat ascending, and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below in the bottom a sepulchre. So I saw in my dream that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more.

Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, "He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death." Then he stood still awhile to look and wonder; for it was very surprising to him that the sight of the cross should thus ease him of his burden. He looked therefore, and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks (Zech. 12. 10). Now, as he stood looking and weeping, behold three shining ones came to him, and saluted him with "Peace be to thee." So the first said to him, "Thy sins be forgiven" (Mark 2. 5); the second stripped him of his rags and clothed him with change of raiment (Zech. 3. 4); the third also set a mark upon his forehead and gave him a roll with a seal upon it (Eph. 1. 13), which he bid him look on as he ran, and that he should give it in at the celestial gate. So they went their way.

Then Christian gave three leaps for joy, and went on singing,

"Thus far did I come loaden with my sin,
Nor could aught ease the grief that I was in,
Till I came hither: what a place is this!
Must here be the beginning of my bliss?
Must here the burden fall from off my back?
Must here the strings that bound it to me crack?
Blest cross! blest sepulchre! blest rather be
The Man that there was put to shame for me!"

THROUGH MANY DANGERS

*The autobiography of Isaac Lewis (1823-1896), for over twenty years
pastor at Staplehurst, Kent
(Continued from page 93)*

It is observed by men that just before the break of day is the darkest part of the night. It was even so with me in soul matters. I will now speak of the state of my mind. One Lord's day in the morning, as I was delivered in the evening, I awoke as dark as midnight in my soul, and as cold as a stone in feeling. I thought I would never again go to chapel. I remained in bed till very late, mourning over my unhappy state and heavy loss; for I felt I had lost all my religion. My wife said, "Come, let us go to chapel." I told her I would have no more to do with religion. She replied, "Let us go today."

Now, dear reader, this request of my wife's was amongst the all things that shall work for good to them who love God. All at once I had a soft feeling and thought: "Dear Mr. Westhorpe has come a long way to preach and you will not be there." I felt so much love to him in my heart that I jumped out of bed, put on my clothes and told my wife to get

ready. How true are John's words, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren"! And the Lord has said, "My people shall be willing in the day of My power." The devil suggested, "The minister won't miss you; he does not think you are a child of God." I said, "That may be true; but I love the man. And I must go and hear him"; although flesh tried hard to keep me from going. I went in the morning, when my soul took the prey, and in the evening divided the spoil.

The dear man in the morning was led to speak from Psalm 130: "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee." Then were the words of our dear Jesus fulfilled: "When He, the Spirit is come, He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." O how ashamed I felt! I could not look up; but it was my mercy that this did not prevent the Lord looking down upon me in love and mercy. The Spirit shone sweetly upon the work of His own hands, and blessedly brought to my mind the hills Mizar and Mount Hermon, and the sweet Bethel visits I had ever enjoyed. My soul was set upon her watch all the morning. I never heard before with so much comfort and satisfaction. I was enabled to believe that I had an interest in all he said, and I went home comforted and strengthened in the inner man. I felt refreshed as a giant with new wine. Truly my soul was at the breast of the gospel, feeding upon the sincere milk of the word. Jesus had spoken peace. The sea of indwelling sin was hushed into a calm. Never before had I experienced such a calm, holy frame of mind. My soul was led into sweet meditation and prayer to Almighty God that He would reveal Himself to me as my alone hope of glory.

At five o'clock in the evening of the same day, whilst musing over the things I had heard, all at once these words, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth *thee* from all sin," dropped into my soul with much power and softness. I knew no more where the words were than a heathen. I was sitting in my kitchen at the time, when the Lord broke into my soul with His pardoning love and mercy. My heart was broken to pieces. God's Word says, "Is not My Word as ... a hammer that breaketh the rocky heart in pieces?" Tears of joy flowed freely, the Holy Ghost working in me such a zeal for God's glory and my soul's eternal safety that I said, "Lord, this is a blessed portion; but do give me another word from Thyself. Gideon-like, I must have another token from Thee."

I arose from my seat, went into my bedroom, shut my door, fell on the floor, and poured out my soul in prayer to the Lord. My wife came in and told me not to make so much noise, as the people in the next house would hear. I replied, "I do not know whether persons hear me or not; but I feel sure that God does." And my soul went to her work again.

Truly it was a work of faith and labour of love in prayer and praise. I had so much freedom at a throne of grace, such holy boldness with the Lord, that I told the great God all I wanted, and what I must have before I could sound forth His praise. I cried and begged of the Lord to grant me my request. He withheld this special blessing for a short time, which was to try my faith and patience. I cried and begged till my strength was gone. The language of the prophet Isaiah was fulfilled in my soul's experience: "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength ... they shall walk, and not faint."

I arose, went into my kitchen, and sat down in a waiting posture, waiting my Lord's coming; and ere I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib. It is "the voice of my Beloved! Behold, He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." He came into my soul with all the blessedness and beauty of the Rose of Sharon. Truly this was the day of my espousals, when He took me unto Himself as a chaste virgin. As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so was my Beloved among the sons. My soul sat down under His shade, and found His fruit sweet to my taste. He called me to His sacred banquet and said, "Eat, O friends; drink, O my beloved." This was the year of my release, the day of jubilee to my soul. The Holy Ghost proclaimed my release from the prison-house of the law with the words in Job. 19. 25-27. I was like a bottle wanting vent.

My dear partner in life was sitting by me, when the tongue of the stammerer was made to speak plain. I could and did say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." Then again; "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." I said to my dear wife, "I know that all my sins are pardoned, past, present and to come." My tongue was made like the pen of a ready writer, whilst testifying of the blessedness of a free, full and eternal salvation by grace, which the Holy Ghost had made me a partaker of by precious faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

A woman who lived in the next house, hearing me talk so loud, came to know what was the matter. She thought my wife and I had been quarrelling: but, to her surprise, it was the proclamation of pardon from the heart and tongue of a five hundred pence debtor. I told her the Lord had in mercy pardoned all my sins: that Christ was mine and that I was His. O what holy rejoicing there was in my soul at this time! I felt I was a worm, and no man, yet the great God had brought me up out of a horrible pit and the miry clay, and set my feet upon the Rock, and established my goings. A new song was put into my mouth, even praise unto my God. The very substance of David's language was in my soul:

“Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul.” There was not a word in David’s language as to what he had done for the Lord; neither could I, a poor worm, say anything that I had done. I knew grace was full and free, without money and without price. I went to the house of God in the evening and, after the service, told the minister and people what great things God had done for me. Some rejoiced, some wondered, some doubted whether it was true, some mourned; but my soul had to rejoice, for I could not doubt or fear. My God had spoken one of His “Fear nots” to my heart with power. The cloud was taken off the tabernacle, for the Sun of Righteousness had arisen with healing in His wings. All the wounds that sin had made were healed.

Some told me I was on the mount now, that I should not be there long, as I should have to come down into the valley. The thought of coming down pained me but for a moment. During the evening, when the minister was in prayer, my soul was in praise. I felt so enriched with the new wine of the kingdom that my soul danced with all her might before the ark of the covenant. So mighty was the dancing that it was difficult for my frame to yield obedience in outward motion to show my friends the joy of my soul. The apostle says (Rom. 6. 13), “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” The tongue is a member, a very useful one to the body and to society. James says, “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!” The tongue is useful in proclaiming God’s gospel and doing God’s work. God made use of Peter on the Day of Pentecost to bring three thousand souls to a knowledge of the truth. Paul travelled hundreds of miles to preach the everlasting gospel, to the salvation of hundreds of the election of grace.

I must now return to my narrative. As soon as the evening service was over, the minister and people came to hear what the Lord had done for my soul: and when I had done speaking, the minister turned to one of the friends present and said, “What do you think of this?” He replied, “It is as blessed an account as I have ever heard.” The minister said, “I can give him the right hand of fellowship, as a brother in Christ.”

(To be continued)

When thou art disappointed with men, retire to God and to His promises, and build upon this, that the Lord will not be wanting in anything to do thee good.

Richard Sibbes

BOOK REVIEW

Dear J – Christian Letters to a Young Friend, by Margaret R. Macleod; hardback; 168 pages; price £7.50 plus postage; published by Free Presbyterian Publications, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE, and obtainable from the publishers.

We only had the privilege of meeting Mrs. Macleod once, and were shocked soon after to hear of her early death. Mrs. Macleod was the wife of the Free Presbyterian minister in the Isle of Harris.

Dear J consists of eighty-four letters written to a young girl, published month by month in the Free Presbyterian *Young People's Magazine*.

These letters are very gracious, beautifully written, most profitable. They deal with all kind of subjects, but especially press home the solemnity of eternity, the vital need to be prepared and the utter vanity of earthly things. There are letters on such subjects as: A New Heart; Eternal Life or Eternal Death; Do You Really Pray?; The Fear of God; Milestones; A Powercut; Little Disciples; The Easy Yoke; Did Jesus Die for Me?; She Found a Better Priest; Real Treasures. The letters are essentially spiritual; there is nothing light or frothy about them. Mrs. Macleod wrote in the light of eternity, knowing that her own days were numbered, before her death at the age of 54.

There is an interesting biographical introduction by the esteemed minister at Dingwall, Neil M. Ross.

This is a beautiful book. We feel it right to mention that there is a Free Presbyterian emphasis – for instance, the Shorter Catechism, the 1893 separation, sole Psalmody, the universal offer of the gospel, infant baptism – some things which our English readers would not altogether understand or agree with.

HEAVENLY BREATHINGS

While sin in its workings engenders despair,
 O Lord, I implore Thee,
 Still kindly watch o'er me,
 And keep down the evils that rage in my heart;
 Give me godly contrition,
 And heart-felt submission,
 To bear what Thou pleasest before I depart.

Soon, soon will my wilderness trials be ended,
 And my weary spirit find welcome repose,
 And soar up to heaven, by angels attended,
 Like poor, needy Lazarus when he arose.
 I long for the day,
 I may hasten away,
 And try my new wings in the region of air,
 And joyfully rise,
 And bound forth to the skies,
 To meet my dear Saviour in blessedness there.

The pathway, I know, to this blessed habitation
Lies still through a desert, all barren and wild;
I know I must travel through much tribulation,
Ere welcomed at home as a heaven-born child.

Give patience, dear Lord;
Feed me still with Thy Word.

They shall mount with wings as eagles;
How dear to my heart is the sweet expectation
That I this frail body shall shortly lay down,
Shall rest from all toil and each anxious vexation,
And see Zion's King with His conqueror's crown;

There love Him for ever,
And grieve Him? No never.

But worship, with all His redeemed, at His feet.
Sweet anticipation!

The realisation

My soul, much enjoy e'er I tell how complete.

And can it be true that the plague spot of evil
Shall never more taint the desires of my soul?
Released from the power of the world, flesh and devil,
Its hallowed emotions sweet love shall control.

This heart, now deceitful,
At length will be faithful,

And ever beat true to its glorious King,
When the Lamb that was slain
Shall have washed out the stain,

And my free ransomed spirit from earth shall take wings.

But ah! I must still in the wilderness languish,
And many a burden my spirit must bear,
O pain, disappointment, and deep mental anguish!
Yet sometimes vouchsafe me a smile of Thy face;

Bow my heart to Thy will,
Teach me how to be still,

And sweetly replenish my soul with Thy grace.

C.M.S.

Found among the papers of one of the Studley Bethesda residents.

Sinners can do nothing but make wounds that Christ may heal them, and make debts that He may pay them, and make falls that He may raise them, and spin out and dig hells for themselves that He may ransom them. Now will I bless the Lord that ever there was such a thing as the free grace of God and a free ransom given for sold souls: only, alas! guiltiness maketh me ashamed to apply Christ, and to think it pride in me to put out my unclean and withered hand to such a Saviour! But it is neither shame nor pride for a drowning man to swim to a rock, nor for a ship-broken soul to run himself ashore upon Christ.

Rutherford

OBITUARY

Julia Ruth Godley, member of the church for over seventy years, at Hastings and then at Station Road, Redhill, died at the Bethesda Home, Hove, on June 7th, 2004, aged 91.

The following is taken from her own writings.

I was called by grace when about thirteen years of age. It was when I was in the sixth standard at day school. We always sang a hymn before we came out of school in the afternoon (it was a church school). This particular one was the one commencing, "God, that madest earth and heaven, Darkness and light," (*Ancient and Modern* 26), but it was the second verse that affected me so:

"Guard us waking, guard us sleeping,
And when we die,
May we be in Thy mighty keeping,
All peaceful lie:
When the last dread call shall wake us,
Do not Thou, O God, forsake us,
But to reign in glory take us
With Thee on high."

I used to feel such a holy awe when singing it, and longed for the words to be true in my case. From this time I began to be very concerned about myself; I wanted to be one of the Lord's people. I could see there was a difference and I prayed that I would be made one of them.

I loved reading good books, especially memoirs. I believe, unless awfully deceived, I have shed many tears while reading them and longed to know what they knew, begging of the Lord to make the same truths dear to my soul. "O," I have said, "I wish I could say such blessed things." I hope it drove me to a throne of grace in real earnest, and I felt sweetness in pouring out my desires.

I remember one afternoon in summer; I took Kershaw's book to read, sitting behind the raspberry canes. O what a sweet time in reading I felt!

How pleased I used to be when Saturday night came! I looked forward to Sunday coming. I had good hearing times under the word preached at Ninfield, walking the three-and-three-quarter miles from Bexhill every Sunday morning in all weathers.

One Monday, I was washing the scullery floor over and these things were passing through my mind. If it were not possible to live without sin and continually keep doing wrong things, what was the use of praying to be made more holy and kept from doing anything amiss and to live more upright? It really puzzled me. These lines of the poet came to me, sweetly, not loudly, but like a still small voice:

"Against its influence pray,
Your prayers will not prove vain,
Our Joseph turns aside to weep,
But cannot long refrain."

In a moment it was showed me how in a great measure sin could be subdued and restrained. Were it not so we should break out in sin and folly as others are

allowed to do. What an unspeakable mercy if we have grace to know the difference! All the glory shall redound to Thy dear name.

I remember one evening, having been very irritable and said some unkind things to my mother, the line came to me afterwards: "The work is only fit for God." I realised I could do nothing towards my own soul's salvation. I am only weakness in myself.

I often used to go to Ebenezer Chapel, Hastings, on Sunday evenings and I dearly loved the ministry of Mr. Robert Brooker, who was then the pastor. It was the time of my first love spiritually. There was hardly a barren time.

On one occasion I sat right at the front; I was nervous, but the Lord calmed my mind. Mr. B. was so nice; he said the Lord's people fear where no fear was, and were full of weakness in and of themselves. He spoke of seekers and said where the Lord had begun a work of grace, He would carry it on and finish it. It was all for me and I feel sure it was the Lord that led him to speak thus. Hymn 145 was given out ["Christ exalted is our song"]. I felt it to be for me, especially the fifth and last verses.

One Saturday afternoon, just before Christmas 1932, Mum and I went shopping. I saw such a pretty blue nightdress case in the window. O I did want it and was very determined to have it. Mother said she did not think I needed such things, and fancy me caring for such worldly stuff! In the evening, Jim and Dad were out and Mum was upstairs with Grandad. I picked up a sermon of Mr. Gosden. I had not read it, so thought I would just scan it through as I do sometimes before reading a thing. Where I looked Mr. G. was speaking on the forgiveness of sins. This seemed to arrest me: he said, "Could we say above all things we wanted the forgiveness of sins?" In an instant everything earthly seemed to drop hold, even the coveted nightdress case. I looked up and said, "Yes Lord, I believe I can say I want it most." I seemed to be on spiritual things immediately. Tears came to my eyes, I felt such sweetness. My heart went upward directly; I felt it was the Lord's doing. O what a good God to me a wicked sinner! Afterwards I went out into the scullery and it came to me like this: now I wonder if that is what the children of God call sweetness, whether that is how they feel? These lines dropped in:

"Tis no wild fancy of our brains,
No metaphor we speak;
The same dear Man in heaven now reigns,
That suffered for our sake."

It was unbelief working to try and make me doubt it, so I sang,

"My willing soul would stay,
In such a frame as this,
Would sit and sing herself away,
To everlasting bliss."

I felt I could not produce such sweetness, but that it was from the Lord Himself. But how soon it waned and, "I to my own sad place return, my wretched state to feel."

I never wanted the nightdress case afterwards, and told Mum so.

How I used to look on while the ordinance was administered and I longed to be amongst them! I became exercised about taking that step and could not shake it off.

On April 9th, 1933, Mr. B. was led in his remarks to speak about baptism. He said, perhaps there is one here exercised about it, but afraid to venture.

“Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude.”

In her diary she wrote,

“O dear Lord, do direct me in this matter and go before me in every step. May I be led to watch Thy leading. I feel and would love to tell the Lord’s people what I hope Thou hast done for me. I would go forward with love to the dear Lord. Do keep me humble and bring it about in Thy own time and way and Thou shalt have all the glory.”

Very remarkably, at Ebenezer on three consecutive Sundays the subject of baptism was brought in, twice by Mr. Brooker and once by Mr. Kirby. Mr. B. seemed to speak home to me. He said it was not necessary to receive the pardon of sins first. I had always thought it must be so. He seemed in speaking so encouraging to me. The last hymn given out was 54 [“I’m not ashamed to own my Lord”]. I felt I could sing it. I was not ashamed to own my Lord, but felt afraid to venture.

One day when walking through Crake Lane, not thinking on anything in particular, this verse sweetly dropped in:

“Dear Lord, the ardour of Thy love,
Reproves my cold delay,
And now my willing footsteps move,
In Thy delightful way.”

In a moment my mind seemed settled. I ventured to see Mr. Brooker on October 18th. I felt I dare not go home until I had seen Mr. Brooker. These were anxious moments. I had to venture with my all on Christ, both for time and eternity. Mr. Brooker was so kind and tried to encourage me. I believe the Lord was in it and helped me.

I went before the deacons on October 30th. It was a bright and starry night. As I looked up into the sky, I asked that the Lord would bring me right through to the end. I was favoured with a revelation of the dear Lord on the cross. I saw by the eye of faith my suffering Saviour; His sacred head was bowed and at that moment He cried, “It is finished.” I felt it was finished for me, I shall never forget it. I felt Ebenezer Chapel to be the sweetest spot on earth, because it was there I felt the forgiveness of my sins.

On November 15th I went before the church at Hastings. I felt very fearful before going, but all fear was taken away and I was enabled to tell the friends what the Lord had done for me. I felt the Lord as my refuge, my rock and I desired to live to His glory and honour while here below and O at last to be found in heaven. It will take eternity to praise Him.

On December 17th, 1933, I was granted the favour of following the Lord in the ordinances of His house. The dear Lord did help me; I felt such a calm feeling, no great fears, although I did not feel the sweetness to the extent I would have loved, yet I felt the Lord was there and I was sweetly persuaded I had done the Lord’s will.

I was received into the church at Ebenezer Chapel, Hastings, on January 7th, 1934. Mr. Brooker spoke very kindly to me and gave me the text: “Then shall we

know, if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning, and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

In October of that year I was asked to take a post in Reigate, Surrey. It seemed a strange move in providence, but I so clearly saw the Lord's hand in the matter. It was in the home of chapel friends, Mr. and Mrs. George Dann. Mrs. Dann had had a severe stroke, which had taken her down one side and she was no longer able to run her home. I ventured to take this big step, but my dear mother was rather distressed, it being a big responsibility and was the first time I had been to live away from home.

Mr. and Mrs. Dann attended Station Road Chapel, Redhill, where Mr. E. Brockes was then pastor. The very first text I heard him preach from was: "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness." I felt much at home. His ministry was made a great help to me as I was in no easy pathway.

After a time I began to feel exercised concerning a godly partner in life and felt led to pray for it. This I did for a long time but there seemed to be no answer and it came to this point: I felt it was no good praying any more concerning this matter. One Wednesday morning, I felt such a spirit of prayer come over me, I could not help praying for it, and all that morning I spent ironing and praying, praying and ironing, and I begged that the Lord would answer it that evening under the Word: whether to go on praying for it, or whether to leave off, and that is how I went to chapel. I had not told a soul. Mr. Brockes read Genesis 32 and his text was in the twenty-fourth verse. He so entered into all my experiences I felt it was all for me and I came away that night with the blessing in my hand.

It was not long after this my dear one and I were brought together; he also had been praying for the same thing. We were married on May 19th, 1945 at Station Road Chapel by Mr. A.G. Charman.

I felt prompted to cast in my lot with my friends at Station Road after being there eleven and a half years. I felt greatly helped, and was received in on April 7th by Mr. Charman.

"His goodness how immense,
To those that fear His name!
His love surpasses thought or sense,
And always is the same."

Many were the trials and deliverances we experienced through our married life. We tried to put the Lord first and some sweet times we had together in His house under the ministry of our late dear pastor Reuben Mercer, and in recent years under the ministry of his son, Philip Mercer.

Once after hearing Mr. Fay preach from the precious blood of Christ, I was waiting at the bus stop to go home, when I had such a sweet sense that I was completely covered by that precious blood. Another time I had just left Bethesda (I worked there at the time), and going round the corner, feeling tired, it was as though the Lord cast His mantle of love over me. There were no words but this verse describes it: "Thou becamest Mine."

In the early part of 1982 my dear husband had begun to fail and was very ill with osteomyelitis, but made a remarkable recovery for about five years. He again took ill and it was felt wise to have our names added to the Bethesda list and this

was most kindly granted. We were both lovingly cared for in the Croydon Bethesda Home, by both matron and staff. (He died in June 1990.) I had no idea when we went into the Home that it would be just fourteen months to that Home closing; we were the last two to go in. Here again I saw the Lord's hand in a most remarkable way, as when the Home closed, my dear friends Mercy and John Jarman opened their home and took me in. I shall ever have cause to sing the love that took me in, where I was most happy.

I dearly loved Mr. C.A. Wood's ministry at Tamworth Road, Croydon. One Sunday morning I shall never forget; it was the Sunday after Mr. Dickinson had passed away. It was heaven begun below and I feel I can say, "The mark of that celestial seal can never be erased." The text was John 14. 1-3.

In the providence of God, Mercy and John moved to Eastbourne to live on August 21st, 1992. This of course brought me back to Sussex where I had been born. I have found a living ministry here under Mr. Seth Mercer, a land of Beulah.

The following are entries from her notebook

Sunday morning, June 12th, 1994. I awoke early at 4.20 with these beautiful words in Isaiah 60. 20: "Thy sun shall no more go down," etc. The whole verse came very sweetly to me. I got out of bed and drew the curtains back. It was a most lovely Sunday morning; the sun was rising. I then saw what looked like a long narrow cloud going up from earth to heaven. The lines of the hymn dropped in,

"From thence He'll quickly come;
His chariots will not stay;
And bear our spirits home,
To realms of endless day.
There shall we see His lovely face,
And ever dwell in His embrace."

I read the chapter through; it was a very sweet time indeed.

March 5th, 1996, I had my cataract operation. When I was first told of it, over twelve months earlier, I felt great distress remembering the problems I had passed through with the other eye some twenty-six years previously. The dear Lord calmed my mind with these words: "No need thou hast to fear,"

"For I will be with thee thy troubles to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress."

That put everything right.

When the time came I was greatly helped through. When about to be taken down to theatre the three lines dropped in:

"Slide softly into promised rest,
Recline thy head on Jesus' breast,
And prove the promise true."

I was quite blind for twenty hours, with the one eye covered over and no sight in the other, but brought safely through. When the sister took the pads, etc., off, I could see beautifully. So thankful did I feel, I said aloud,

"O magnify the Lord with me,
With me exalt His name."

I had two nights in hospital; the surgeon was very pleased with the operation. "And in the mount it shall be seen, how kind and gracious God has been."

On Tuesday morning, September 5th, 2000, I woke about three o'clock early and as I lay in bed not thinking of anything in particular, a soft small voice spoke these words to me, "Your sins which are many are all forgiven." I thought how wonderful, and these words were on the calendar (Choice Gleanings) that morning. It was very confirming

Sunday, February 23rd, 2003, a time to be remembered by me. The text was Psalm 73. 24. This verse was written in our wedding Bible by Mr. A.G. Charman, who married us. Mr. Seth was so helped in the evening. I felt the sweetness of it and I felt to be nearly in heaven and wondered if I was soon to be taken. It was indeed a blessed place to me.

April 6th, 2003, as I lay awake before I got up this Sunday morning, these three lines dropped in:

"Nor longer here remain,
But dwell, dear Jesus, where Thou art;
For me to die is gain."

I felt these lines were specially given to me.

Towards the end of August, just before I went up to Redhill on the 28th, while sitting in my armchair, these lines dropped in so sweetly: "Thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry." This verse was given me many years ago while at work.

At the end of her funeral instructions she had written: "May I be ready."

Here her writings end.

Our dear friend had to leave Mercy and John Jarman's to go into the Brighton Bethesda Home about a month before she died. She was taken home suddenly early on Monday morning, June 7th, 2004. She lived a godly, consistent life and her testimony was "known and read" by all who knew her. Her end was peace.

G.W.H.

Her pastor adds:

Our sister in the Lord came to Redhill last in October 2003. We took her to see her husband's grave and she said she was ready whenever the Lord would come for her. The funeral took place on Thursday, July 1st, 2004. Her pastor took the service in Station Road Chapel, Redhill. The committal was at Redstone Cemetery which Mr. G.W. Hyde took with Mr. C.A. Wood concluding in prayer.
P.R.M.

2004 ANNUAL MEETINGS

Mr. R.J. Farley has written to state that the report in the June 2004 *Gospel Standard* of what he said at the Annual Meetings a year ago is not a true report. A full transcript of what Mr. Farley said may be obtained from the Secretary of the Gospel Standard Societies if desired.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
MAY 2005

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

England, What Hast Thou Done?

Hast thou admitted with a blind, fond trust,
The LIE that burned thy fathers' bones to dust;
That first adjudged them heretics, then sent
Their souls to heaven, and cursed them as they went?
The LIE that Scripture strips of its disguise,
And execrates above all other lies;
The LIE that claps a lock on mercy's plan,
And gives the key to yon infirm old man,
Who, once ensconced in "apostolic" chair,
Is deified and sits omniscient there;
The LIE that knows no kindred, owns no friend,
But him that makes its progress his chief end,
That having spilt much blood, makes that a boast,
And canonizes him that sheds the most?

Away with charity that soothes a LIE,
And thrusts the truth with scorn and anger by!
Shame on the candour, and the gracious smile,
Bestowed on them that light the martyr's pile;
While insolent disdain, in frowns expressed,
Attends the tenets that endured that test!

Grant them the rights of men, and while they cease
To vex the peace of others, grant them peace;
But trusting bigots, whose false zeal has made
Treachery their duty, thou art self-betrayed!

William Cowper (1731-1800)

ROMAN CATHOLICISM – NOT THE TRUE GOSPEL

*Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
on Lord's day morning, April 10th, 2005.*

Text: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1. 8).

This last week has witnessed some of the most amazing things that have ever been known in the lifetime of any of us: the excitement, the enthusiasm surrounding the death and burial of the pope. Rome has never seen anything like it before, and our country has never witnessed anything like it before, and our newspapers have never witnessed anything like it before – the reverence, the exaltation, the adulation from all the heads of state throughout the world, the heir to our own throne going in deference to Rome, the Prime Minister of our Protestant country and the Archbishop of our supposedly Protestant church preferring to go to the Roman Catholic funeral than the wedding of the heir to our Protestant throne. Now there never have been such scenes like it in our lifetime. I do not think there has been such adulation of anyone. Winston Churchill was a great man, but there were never things said about him as have been said about the pope this week.

It is very powerfully laid on my spirit that I have to speak to you this morning about the apostate church of Rome. The text I have read to you is one of the most solemn in the New Testament. It is repeated again in the following verse: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Now the gospel of the Roman Catholic church is *another gospel*, and because it is *another gospel*, that church is under the solemn curse, the solemn anathema of Almighty God. I want to speak especially to our children and young people this morning, because there seems to be a spirit about as if the Roman Catholics are good Christians; they may be a little bit different, but it does not really matter. The church of Rome is an apostate church and the gospel that it preaches is under the anathema, the curse of Almighty God. Now people say to me, "But you believe that there are real Christians in the Roman Catholic church, don't you?" Now beloved friends, God is the Judge. God is the Judge of who is a real Christian, either in the Roman Catholic church or in Bethel chapel. But one thing I am clear on, if a person lives and dies believing in the awful errors of the Roman Catholic church and resting his immortal soul on those errors, then in no way can he be saved or enter heaven.

Let me make one or two things very clear as simply as I can right at the beginning. First of all, we are speaking of a system, an evil system,

a wrong system. We are not speaking about people. Individual Roman Catholics can be nice and kind. They may even be among your friends. Some are very sincere (though sincerely wrong). We are not speaking about people. We are speaking about a system and the dreadful things that system teaches and the errors that that system teaches, so that living and dying believing those errors, there is no hope, no salvation, no heaven.

Now let us be clear on these points. We live in a day when there is so much compromise, so much suggesting it does not really matter, so much suggesting it is just a little difference. It is a *vital* difference; it is all the difference between heaven and hell. And this morning, with that on my heart, I want to warn you against the dreadful errors of Romanism. I repeat, we are not speaking about people; we are speaking about an evil and corrupt system.

Also, let me say this, that I am not going to talk this morning about so many of those things that we do not really like. I mean bells and candles and incense and crosses and crucifixes and idols and images and nunneries, and things like that. I am going to leave all that. I am just going to speak to you about the true gospel and the false gospel.

Also, I am not even going to speak this morning about the Roman Catholic church as a persecuting church, though the cruelties that the Roman Catholic church has performed down the ages are as great cruelties as any that have been known. It was only suggested this week that the greatest terrorist attack that has ever been known in the history of England was when the Roman Catholics in the Gunpowder Plot tried to blow up parliament and massacre the king and queen and the whole of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The cruelties of the Roman Catholic church in England have been appalling, and even today in those countries, those parts of the world where the Roman Catholic church has power and authority, it is still a cruel church, still a persecuting church. But I am not even going to talk about that this morning. I just want to talk to you on a few vital points about the true gospel. There are all these other things that we do not agree with, we do not like; many, many of them I might have mentioned this morning. Now we are going to leave all those and just come to vital points which concern the everlasting salvation of the soul.

“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” He repeats it: “As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

1. Now the first thing is this: *the true gospel teaches only one way of salvation – by grace and not by works.* “For by grace are ye saved

through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” Now the Roman system from top to bottom, from first to last, is a system of works, something that the sinner can do, something that he must do, something that he has to do; partly grace, partly works; partly what God has done, partly what man has to do; not just repentance, but performing penances.

The vital point experimentally in real religion is to be blessed with real repentance, “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,” repentance from sin. Now the Vulgate, the Roman version of Scripture, has even translated repentance wrongly. Where John the Baptist and the Saviour preached *repentance*, the Roman version renders it, *do penance*. Beloved friends, there is all the difference in the world between a sinner blessed with true, godly, Holy Ghost repentance and a sinner doing a few man-prescribed penances. Now this is vital, and to depart from it is error, and to depart from it is to be under the curse of God, and that is how multitudes are blinded, that somehow, some way, something must be done towards their salvation.

“No news can suit a ruined race,
But sovereign, free, eternal grace;
No other gospel can impart
Joy, peace and comfort to the heart.”

The glorious gospel of the grace of God does not come to a guilty sinner and tell him to do anything at all for his salvation. It points to it as all done, all accomplished in Christ. It is not, do this and live. Mind you, the grace that saves will always sanctify. A sinner saved by grace will be very tender, very careful, very concerned as to how he lives, what he does, what he does not do, how he behaves. But the whole teaching of Scripture is that salvation from first to last is of grace, God’s free, unmerited favour to wretched, ruined, hell-deserving sinners. It began in eternity past in the covenant when in grace God chose a people. It continues when in grace God sent His dear Son. It is revealed: “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.” Grace revealed in His finished work, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His glorification in heaven. Grace only when a sinner is called, savingly converted. Grace only in his salvation from first to last. Grace and grace alone in preparing heaven for him. “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you ... let him be accursed.” That is God’s word, not mine. The Roman gospel is another gospel and it has blinded millions and held them in darkness and bondage and sent them to the grave without hope.

Of course, beloved friends, this was the point of the glorious Reformation. God raised up Martin Luther. The whole of Europe

seemed to be in this darkness and bondage, this system of salvation only through the various things that man could do, God doing part, the sinner doing part. You remember Luther, under the depths of his conviction and groaning under his sins, tried to do everything that was prescribed by the Roman church. If ever any man attempted it, if ever any man tried it, it was Luther, but he was left in black despair, until like a ray of light the gospel was revealed: “The just shall live by faith” – not what man has done, not what Luther needs to do, not what Luther can do – what God in Christ has done. And his heart was filled “with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” And the Lord used him to write, to preach, to protest so that really in a hundred years almost the whole of Europe was turned upside down. And now sadly, solemnly there is a turning back, and those who belong to churches which were founded on those sacred truths for which Luther contended and for which he suffered and for which our martyrs were burned, they now fraternise with this apostate church. So first of all, the gospel – one way and only one way of salvation – by grace, not in any way through man’s merit. “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you ... let him be accursed.”

2. Now the second point: *the gospel teaches that there is only one Mediator – Christ, not Mary*. Now every religion, true or false, realises there must be a mediator, even those heathen religions, even the religion professed by cannibals. They all seem to realise there must be a mediator, that God is great and holy and man is weak and helpless and sinful, and man cannot go immediately to God, cannot go directly to God. There must be someone standing between who can represent man to God and God to man. There must be a mediator. Every religion, true or false, believes there must be a mediator. And the gospel declares, “There is ... one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.” Now there is no other. God in the riches of His grace has appointed a Mediator in His dear Son, and there is no other. There is no other way to God. There is no other way of access. There is no other way of approach. There is no other way of acceptance. There is no other way of worship. One God, holy, righteous, and one Mediator most graciously appointed “between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.”

The church of Rome has set up Mary as a mediator. (I understand the correct word, being a woman, is a mediatrix.) If a sinner’s hope is in Mary, then it is a vain hope. If a sinner prays to Mary, then that prayer can never be answered. It seems today more than ever before that Mary is being honoured, not only equal with Christ, almost above Christ; that sinners are taught to pray to Mary so that Mary might incline the heart of her Son towards them. So in the rosary – you know the rosary that the Roman Catholic carries and the beads are counted in prayer – there are

many more prayers to Mary as the mediator than there are to the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Of course, in the last hundred and fifty or so years the church of Rome has declared two things: that Mary was born immaculate, without sin, free from original sin; secondly that Mary, when she died, bodily rose from the dead and is now risen, exalted, glorified at God's right hand in heaven. These two things to bolster up Mary as the mediator between man and God. Let us be clear, she was a godly woman. There never was a more godly woman than Mary. Never speak disrespectfully of Mary. Didn't the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ love her, honour her! But she is not a saviour; she is not a mediator; sinners cannot pray to her; sinners cannot approach a holy God through her. There is *one* Mediator, and this is the glorious truth the gospel makes known to which the Roman church has blinded its adherents, that there is a glorious Mediator, the God-Man standing between a holy God and a guilty sinner. O the hundreds who have been blessed by that wonderful word of John Newton:

“But since my Saviour stands between,
In garments dyed in blood,
'Tis He, instead of me, is seen,
When I approach to God.”

Beloved friends, we have a glorious gospel centring in the Person and work of the one Mediator, the Lord Jesus. So the gospel teaches that there is one Mediator and only one Mediator – Christ, not Mary. “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you ... let him be accursed.”

3. Now the third thing: *the gospel teaches that there is one foundation on which the church is built – Christ, not Peter.* And it is a blessed foundation, isn't it? “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation.” That is Christ, not Peter. What could be clearer than this: “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”? Now on one occasion the Lord Jesus said to Peter, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Of course, that word has been dreadfully perverted. Now “Peter” and the original Greek name for “the rock” are almost one and the same. But you remember what was happening at Caesarea Philippi. Peter had made that noble confession of faith in the glorious Person of Jesus the Son of God. “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? ... But whom say ye that I am?” And the glorious confession of Peter, that Christ is the Son of God. “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. And I say also

unto thee, That thou art Peter,” which in a way means a stone or a rock. But “upon *this* rock” – Peter’s noble confession – “upon *this* rock” – the Rock Christ Jesus – “upon *this* rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Now the church of Rome teaches that the church is built on Peter as the foundation, and there is all this talk about Peter being the first pope. Peter was never any pope. If anything, it seems that perhaps James took the pre-eminence over Peter in those early days in the Acts of the Apostles. But some dispute whether Peter was ever the Bishop of Rome, or whether Peter even visited Rome, or whether Peter was ever buried in this wonderful tomb of Peter in Rome. But leaving all that. If Peter did visit Rome, if he is buried in Rome, if he was the first Bishop of Rome, the church of the living God is not built on Peter. Peter was a godly man, a sinner saved by grace, but he made a lot of mistakes, didn’t he? He was a fallible man. Three times he denied his Lord with oaths and curses. The gospel teaches a better foundation on which the church of God is built than Simon Peter.

Wouldn’t Peter have been distressed if he had known that in later days people were saying that he was the foundation of the church! Doesn’t he write so beautifully in his own first Epistle, the second chapter: “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious” – the true foundation! “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious,” as the foundation. But Christ is not only the foundation of the whole church of God, but the foundation of every guilty sinner’s hope. And beloved friends, it is a good foundation when you feel your emptiness, your weakness, your need, your sin, as a poor, venturing sinner to rest your everlasting all on Jesus. “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.” Now that is the religion that takes a guilty sinner to heaven. O but the awful blasphemy of a mere man, though a godly man, being the church’s one foundation! No, the gospel teaches one foundation, only one foundation – Christ, not Peter. “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you ... let him be accursed.”

4. Now then the fourth thing: *the gospel teaches there is only One who can forgive sin – and that is the Lord, not a human priest.* “Who can forgive sins, but God alone?” There are some glorious truths taught in the gospel of the grace of God concerning forgiveness, that a poor, guilty sinner is permitted to go to the great God of heaven and humbly say, “I am sorry,” and to beg for forgiveness for Jesus’ sake through His precious blood, and God not angry, not displeased. “Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity?” O what an error, that any human priest can have power to forgive sin! This exalts the Roman priesthood,

if a priest can forgive your sin, if you go to that priest in confession and he can forgive your sin. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" Or as Jesus said to the poor man, "That ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

A minister is not a priest. I am not a priest. A Church of England minister is not a priest. The Archbishop of Canterbury is not a priest. A Roman Catholic minister is not a priest. The pope is not a priest. Scripture is very clear. In one sense it teaches that every single believer is a priest, the universal priesthood of all believers. But the sacrifice they bring is the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. So if I am a true believer, in that sense I am a priest, but there are many of you in chapel this morning and you are just as much a priest as I am. But then there is only one great and glorious High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, having offered the one sacrifice, and now risen, exalted, glorified in heaven. A wonderful truth, the everlasting priesthood of the Son of God! He has power to forgive sin, and blessed be His name, He has promised to forgive the sin of every poor, venturing, humble, confessing sinner and to wipe out that sin in His precious blood.

There was an old Irish woman some years ago who was in hospital dying, and she was completely disillusioned with the claims of the Roman Catholic Irish priesthood. This priest kept saying continually to her, "Confess your sins to me. You have to confess your sins to me. Only I can forgive your sins." She said, "Sir, do you mind showing me your hands?" The priest said, "What are you talking about, woman?" She said, "Sir, show me your hands." Well, he did. She said, "The only One who can forgive my sins has nail prints in His hands." Now that is it! There is only One who can forgive sin and that is the Lord Himself, not any human so-called priest.

"Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you ... let him be accursed."

5. Now let me mention a fifth and last thing, though there are many, many things I might have spoken of this morning. The fifth and last point: *the gospel teaches only one sacrifice for sin – Calvary, not the mass*. Now let me emphasise, beloved friends, these are the vital points. There is salvation, there is heaven in them, and for those who deny them and teach another gospel, there is no salvation and no heaven; there is the curse of God upon it. These are vital things. At Calvary the dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in His sin-atonement sufferings and precious blood and death offered the one sacrifice for sin and by that "one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." It was a complete work, a perfect work. Nothing can ever be added to it; nothing can ever be taken from it. He cried, "It is finished," and all the sins of all His people in all ages were for ever put away.

Now you know what the Roman Catholic mass is. Some people in Protestant churches speak of the Lord's Supper; we do. Some speak of the communion service; sometimes we do. Some call it the eucharist – a strange word, but there is really nothing wrong in it. It means just a thanksgiving. Some call it the breaking of bread. The Roman Catholics call it the mass. And their belief is the most appalling error, that in the consecration service the bread is literally changed into the body of the Lord Jesus and the wine is literally changed into the blood of the Lord Jesus. It is appalling blasphemy. So the priest week by week sacrifices the Son of God afresh, as he believes, and puts Him to an open shame. It is no wonder that Almighty God has pronounced the curse: "Let him be accursed." But the dreadful thing is that our leaders, not only political but also religious, can flock after such appalling errors and blasphemies as these. O there is only one sacrifice, blessed sacrifice, the sacrifice of the cross where the dear Lord Jesus sacrificed Himself that poor sinners washed in His blood might be saved with an everlasting salvation.

I am trying to speak to you positively this morning, not only to denounce the dreadful errors in the church of Rome which have been so eulogised this week, but more than that, to emphasise the glorious gospel of the grace of God. "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel ... let him be accursed." There is something lies behind and under all this. We have only one standard concerning what is the gospel and what is not, what is right and what is wrong, what is permitted and what is not permitted, and that is *God's holy, infallible Word*. Now the Roman Catholics have introduced two things. One is tradition. The tradition of the church of Rome is given equal weight with holy Scripture. So even if a thing is wrong, if it has been held for many years, because it is a tradition it is accounted to have the same authority as Scripture. But then secondly, the Roman Catholic church believes that the pope is infallible when he is speaking *ex cathedra*, that is, when he is speaking as the pope. So a hundred and fifty years ago the pope could declare that Mary was born without sin. There is not a shred of evidence for this in Scripture. Then more recently the pope declared that Mary is risen from the dead, and bodily exalted in heaven. There is not a shred of evidence for this in Scripture. Let us be clear, the only standard we have is the holy Word of God, what it teaches, what it does not teach, not tradition and certainly not the pronouncements of a supposed infallible pope.

Well, beloved friends, I could say many, many things. The outward face of the Roman Catholic church in recent years has changed. It seems to be more friendly. It seems to be more benevolent. But the motto, the watchword of the Roman Catholic church: *semper idem*, always the

same. There has been no change, not the slightest change, not the smallest change in any doctrine that the church of Rome holds. You know what the old godly divines used to say: "No peace with Rome till Rome makes peace with God."

"Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel ... let him be accursed." Now in closing, in all these things may we have a right spirit, may we have a sympathetic spirit to those who are held in darkness. May we not think we are better. May we not think we are superior. May we always fall under that word: "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" To bring it right home, we have a glorious gospel, but if you and I do not know it in power and in love in salvation in our own souls, we are no better than a poor, blind, benighted Romanist. Now beloved friends, lay these things to your heart.

"Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

This sermon is available free of charge as a small booklet from Mrs. Alison A. Kingham, 11 Sutherland Place, Luton, LU1 3SY.

MERCY AND TRUTH MEETING IN JESUS

By Charles Bridges (1794-1869)

"By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil" (Proverbs 16. 6).

The true exposition of this verse requires much care and consideration. We protest against that false principle of theology, which substitutes the grand doctrines of the gospel in the place of its practical statements. The purging of iniquity seems here, however, to direct us to expiation. Therefore to connect it with man's mercy and truth is to overturn the foundation of the gospel. These are duties to be performed (Prov. 3. 3), not atonement for sin: and often are they performed by men destitute of the grace of God, whose iniquity therefore is not purged. They may indeed in the dispensation of God be available for averting national judgments (Dan. 4. 27). But there is a wide difference between this "lengthening tranquillity," and purging iniquity. On the other hand, considering that divine mercy and truth are frequently exhibited in connection with this invaluable blessing, the analogy of faith appears to link it here with these combined perfections, which kiss in Christ the Mediator (Psa. 85. 10), and with that covenant of grace, in which they shine so brightly.

Should this view be thought not to cohere with the general tenor of this book [*A Commentary on Proverbs*], which deals more with practical points and matters of common life than with the deeper articles of faith, it may be observed that, when some of its pages are so fully illuminated by evangelical sunshine (Prov. 8. 9), we might naturally expect – besides this connected splendour – occasional rays of doctrinal light to rest upon this system of Christian morals.

Taking, therefore, in accordance with most of our best critics and soundest expositors, this ground of interpretation, we observe the great controversy between God and man. Man would purge iniquity by repentance or external ceremonials. God determines it by sacrifice; not nullifying the sanctions of the law by a simple deed of mercy, but combining the manifestation of His truth by fulfilling these sanctions upon the Surety, which mercy provided (Isa. 53. 6; 2 Cor. 5. 21).

No display of mercy can be conceived in force and emphasis to compare with that awful moment when God “spared not His own Son” (Rom. 8. 32), but permitted blameless love and purity to agonise upon the cross. Yet was this wondrous display of mercy a display of truth not less wondrous; inasmuch as it was the means by which inflexible justice could justify the guilty (Rom. 3. 26). So gloriously do these two attributes harmonise!

We enquire not to which we owe the deepest obligation. Mercy engages, truth fulfils, the engagements. Mercy provides, truth accepts, the ransom. Both sat together in the eternal council. Both made their public entrance together into the world. Both, like the two pillars of the temple (1 Kings 7. 21), combine to support the Christian’s confidence: that though there is abundant material for condemnation even in the holiest saint, actual condemnation there is not, there cannot be (Rom. 7. 14-25; 8. 1).

But if in the first clause of the verse we see how the guilt of iniquity is purged, the second clause shows how its power is broken. The very exercise of forgiveness is to implant a conservative principle. By the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil. The supposition of pardon for a sinner continuing impenitent would be to unite the two contraries of reconciliation and enmity. Iniquity is not purged that we should wallow again in the mire. The beam of light, which scatters every record of condemnation, is convincing, sanctifying, healing to the soul. Indeed God shows the deepest abhorrence of sin in the very act of its expiation.

Yet the implanted principle of obedience is no legal bondage. The fear of the Lord is at once a bridle to sin and a spur to holiness. It changes the slave into a child. Filial confidence – its twin-grace – like a seven-fold shield covers from sin. Sin’s very touch is hateful; and all its ways are abhorred and forsaken.

WARNINGS AGAINST SPIRITUAL DECAY

From An Exposition of the Parables by Benjamin Keach (1640-1704)

I infer that it is no certain sign a man is a child of God, and shall be saved, because he hears the Word of God preached, or loves to hear sermons, or makes a visible profession of religion, and becomes a church member, and does many things that are commendable or praiseworthy, for all these things are common to reprobate or unsound professors as with elect ones. Nay, though a man holds out in religious practices for many years unsuspected, yet afterwards he may decay and wither.

Be exhorted to take heed lest you wither away, as the stony ground hearers do: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb. 3. 12). Unbelief, though it is in itself but a denial to assent to, or to rely on God in Christ according to the revelation of His will in the gospel, yet it is the rise or spring of all other sins, and the seeming womb (as one observes) from whence issueth all unrighteousness, hardness of heart, and it is the root of withering, and oftentimes of final apostasy.

Question: What should we do to prevent withering?

1. *Answer:* Never rest until you do arrive to some good and certain demonstrations of your union with Christ; for if a man be not grafted into Christ by the Spirit, he will not abide long in a profession of the gospel before he withers and decays in his profession, zeal and seeming piety: "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me" (John 15. 4). No man can abide in Christ that was never grafted into Him; true he may be externally in Him, by a visible profession, or in the vine the church, that sometimes bears Christ's name; and such are said to be in Christ. But without our being spiritually or internally in Him, we can bring forth no fruit to perfection. We are married to Christ, "that we might bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom. 7. 4).

2. Be sure you are truly regenerated, or born again; the tree must be made good before the fruit can be good, as to the nature of it, as well as to the abiding or duration of it. It is the good ground that brings forth fruit to eternal life. Now no man's ground (I mean his heart) is naturally good; it is grace only that makes the heart good.

3. Be sure that your faith is of the right kind, or is the faith of the operation of God. True faith is always attended with good fruits, yea such fruit that remains; true believers shall not cease bearing fruit: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jer. 17. 7, 8).

Trusting in God and believing truly in God through Jesus Christ is one and the same thing. Such always draw saving or divine virtue from Christ, which keeps them alive and prevents their withering. A temporary faith is not the faith of God's elect. They that believe but for a time will bring forth fruit but for a time; such cannot bear the heat when it cometh, nor stand in the year of drought.

4. Labour to have a sound judgment, to discern between truth and error. This is commonly obtained by sitting under a sound, true gospel ministry. If we would not wither, we must be grounded, and built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles. It is for want of a good understanding that some fall into errors, and so wither and die away.

5. Get also a sound and steadfast persuasion of the truth thou professest. Be not satisfied with having the truth in thy Bible, nor in thy head or mouth, to talk of it, or dispute for it; but get it into thy heart. See thou hast an experimental knowledge of the nature and power of divine truth in thy own soul. Many do not receive the truth in the love of it, and they are such that wither and fall away, either by being carried away by the craftiness of deceivers into detestable errors and heresies, or else are overcome with the love of this present evil world, as Demas was.

If a man hath tasted how good and gracious the Lord is, and of Christ's love and His merits, he will never totally wither and fade away; sincerity will preserve him.

If you experience how sweet the favour of God is, the love of Christ is, you will find it stronger than death. No waters can quench it, nor can the floods drown it. You will not lay down your head, nor remain in a doubtful suspense of your salvation, nor ever wither away and come to nothing.

6. See that thy heart and conscience is always kept tender, making strait steps for thy feet, and do not give way to sin, or any time to the neglect of thy duties. It is for want of tenderness of heart many wither. The stony ground is hard, therefore brings no fruit forth unto perfection. Inward guilt will be like a worm at the root. If we allow ourselves in any known sin, or regard iniquity in our hearts, in vain do we pray for grace and the influences of the Spirit to keep us alive; for God will not hear thy prayers, as David shows, if we regard iniquity in our hearts.

7. See that you daily attend upon the Word and ordinances of God, and be much in meditation. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40. 31). This will be an excellent means to prevent withering and decaying in grace and holiness. Can a man expect to be strong that forsakes his food, or will not eat? If once our appetite is gone, our strength will soon be gone. Now the Word and ordinances of God are the food of the soul; it is that

which tends to strengthen our hearts. I mean, God thereby doth in a gracious manner strengthen us: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord" (Psa. 27. 14).

But do not only wait on the Lord in hearing of His Word, and in the Lord's Supper, and in meditation, but also in prayer. Be much in prayer; cry often and mightily to God if you would not wither and decay in grace. A man may live that cannot breathe, or without breathing, as well as a Christian may live and be lively without praying; for prayer, spiritual prayer, is the breath of the new creature. Two things are absolutely necessary in order to spiritual growth.

First, our being born again, or getting a changed heart.

Secondly, our being fed and daily nourished with the food of the Word: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2. 2).

8. See that you daily keep close to God in the holy fellowship and communion of the saints, in receiving and communicating with them, and let not small things impede or hinder thee from thy indispensable duty herein, if thou wouldest not decay and wither. Nay, abide constantly in that place and fellowship where thou art a member; let not thy place be empty at any time, if thou art able to go thither. "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon" (Song 1. 7). At noon, that is when the sun is up, and shines very hot, i.e., when persecution rises because of the Word. It is to be feared the stony ground hearers did not take care when the sun was up to get among the saints, under the shadow of Christ, in His house, but abode alone, abroad in the world; and so they were scorched. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

9. Think often of the shortness of your lives. Many think they shall have time enough to recover themselves hereafter; whereas did they but look upon themselves just a going to die, or that death was at the door, they would act and live otherwise; that is to say, be more serious and careful in watching their hearts and ways. "Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh" (Matt. 24. 44). We know not how short our lives may be, therefore should be always on our watch. "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." This doubtless (as we find by experience) will be a great help to our leading of a sober and heavenly life, and so prevent withering.

10. Add one grace to another. "Beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity" (2 Pet.

1. 5-7). Faith being in exercise it will set all other graces on work. “For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (verse 8). Nay, more, they will make us active, lively, green and flourishing in our profession, and blessed with knowledge of Christ; and that to such a degree that we shall never wither nor decay in grace and holiness.

11. If you would not decay or wither, you must see that you early weed your own hearts. You know that weeds oftentimes choke the seed, and cause it to be weak, and so to wither; therefore you will weed your corn and your gardens. So must we weed our hearts day by day, or else one sin or corruption or another will spoil the seed of grace that is sown in them. We must weed out that pride, that inordinate love to the world, that passion, that unbelief, that carnality of our affections, and that hypocrisy and deadness out of our hearts that remain. This we must do, if we would not wither and decay in our souls, as the stony-ground professors did.

12. See that you are never offended at the Word, as the counterfeit Christian sometimes is. “When tribulation and persecution ariseth because of the Word, by and by he is offended.” Men may be offended three ways.

i. When the Word puts them to this choice, i.e., whether they will have Christ or the world; whether they will have Christ and forego their trades, their goods, their friends, their liberty and their lives for Christ, or forego Christ, forsake Christ for these things. Now when this choice was put to the young man in the gospel, rather than he would part with his possessions, he bids Christ farewell; he was offended and went away sorrowful. This choice hath offended many in our days, and therefore some have cleaved to the false church, and to human rites and ceremonies, rather than be exposed to suffer loss and want in the world, and bear persecution for Christ’s sake.

ii. When the doctrine of Christ is too hard for their understanding, or because it lies above their own human reason, they are by and by offended. They will have no religion that wholly depends upon the revelation of God’s Word, but only that which comports with their natural reason and natural knowledge. They must do something for to save themselves, must work for life. To believe for righteousness, to trust to and depend upon another’s righteousness, this doctrine they are offended at. Hence in these days what dangerous books are published, asserting that there is nothing in the gospel which is above our own human reason to comprehend. Thus the Jews that heard our blessed Saviour say that unless a man eat His flesh and drink His blood, he had no life in him (John 6. 53). They were offended, and went their way.

iii. When the Word pursues them close and follows them home to their consciences, telling them that every secret sin and lust, though never so pleasant or profitable, must be parted with; they are offended when it tells them their right eye must be pulled out, and their right hand must be cut off, or [when it] begins once to touch or meddle with their Herodias, their bosom sin, they are offended, and they wither away. Now a true believer takes Christ for better or worse; whithersoever He goes, he will follow Him, though it be to the cross. Whatsoever He commands us to do, we must obey Him, though it be to offer up our own beloved Isaacs, if we would never wither or decay in grace and holiness.

13. Resolve to endure any hardness for Jesus Christ. The design of Christ in persecution and tribulation is to try His people, that it may be seen and known who are sound and sincere, and who are not. A mighty wind many times shakes down an old rotten house, and floods overthrow houses built upon the sands. A weak and feeble person cannot go up a mighty hill; also a tender and sickly man cannot bear to lie all night in the field on the cold ground in a frosty and bitter season. So none but such whom grace fortifies and enables to endure hardness, trouble and persecution can abide to the end in their holy profession under trials.

14. From hence we may infer from whence it is that so many professors fall away in a time of persecution. Alas, their hearts were not right with God, their hearts were hard and stony.

SPIRITUAL DECLENSION (2)

To E.M.

Much-beloved in Jesus, I must send you another thought or two on our last subject. You know it was spiritual declension and consequent want of savour and unction in living souls. We were especially considering the cases of those who have been kept accurate in all outward observances, active in works of charity, and even been zealous promoters of the salvation of others. Sad, indeed, is a case like this; but I am forcibly arrested with the possibility of such being convicted of the state, but not converted from it. An acknowledgment of wandering is not return; a consciousness of a dry, barren state is not restoration.

Perhaps you can hardly conceive a living soul, convinced of being in the wrong and lingering there, without earnestly and diligently seeking after the right – but I can; for this bad, bad heart has experienced what drowsiness and listlessness sometimes follow sleep, when there is no heart to arise and call upon the Lord for deliverance. Seeing the case to be bad, we just shrink from knowing it fully, and fear rather to be

thoroughly aroused to reap painfully what has been sown to the flesh, than desire at any cost to be brought back to close communion with our God.

Look at Jonah: he knew he was a wanderer, but there seemed no anxiety to return; he would rather forget it in sleep. The storm was the Lord's messenger to oblige the man to awake him, and the fish His servant to swallow him up; so that from his senseless sleep he must go down to "the belly of hell," to make him heartily call upon his God; and from that low place the sweet song was to be put into his mouth, "Salvation is of the Lord."

Not only salvation from hell is of the Lord, but also the many experimental salvations which we need on our pilgrim journey. And O it is a blessed salvation to be brought nigh when there has been a following of "Jesus afar off"; and by His precious blood to be purged and cleansed from our own doings, works and inventions, when they have come to be like a cloud between the soul and Him. It is blessed to have any secret thing taken away which maketh the consolations of God small with us. But here is the trying point – whatever is between God and the soul must be taken away to restore nearness; and this is a sacrifice at which most of us tremble, finding it easier to condemn the wrong in others, and even to acknowledge it in ourselves, than to ask the Lord honestly and heartily to take it away.

As I said before, there are many in this busy but cold-hearted day, many of the Lord's people who are most active and energetic in His service, but the cream of their communion is gone, and the fire of love has languished. There are sounds of Jesus and salvation on the lips, but none of His sweet savour flowing from their hearts, nor any of His fresh tokens to tell to those who fear His name (Psa. 66. 16).

Some are in a measure aroused to a sense of their state, but are not delivered from it; they know that it is not with them as in years gone past, but they are too busy to give close attention to personal facts, and to be really diligent to know the state of their own flocks and herds (Prov. 27. 23). They desire a change in their experience, but have not time to seek it, and in this sense are like the slothful who "desireth, and hath nothing" (Prov. 13. 4). All their energies go out another way, and they are too closely occupied with their religious engagements to follow their Lord, who withdrew from the multitude into the wilderness and prayed, and who another time "went up into a mountain to pray," and on another occasion "continued all night in prayer to God."

O my beloved, did the immaculate Lamb of God so much use retirement and prayer, as we find by many portions of Scripture He did? How much more do we need it who have sin dwelling in us, and often working under the most specious forms! The truth is, we cannot thrive without it.

Where the experience has indeed become as a wilderness, what double need there is to withdraw from the cases of others and cry mightily unto God to make that “wilderness rejoice and blossom as the rose.” Where there has been much talking about gospel day, but long, long night within, what cause is there to withdraw from all, and wrestle with Him, who “turneth the shadow of death into the morning” (Amos 5. 8)! In so doing the feeling of the wilderness state will probably deepen before the rejoicing returns, and the night will seem to grow darker before the bright shining of the Sun of Righteousness rises again upon the soul. Still, the blessed Spirit can enable us to endure; and though He keeps the soul waiting for the Sun and watching for Him “more than they that watch for the morning,” yet such experience shall not be in vain, for “blessed are all they that wait for Him,” and “they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.” However weak they have become, the Lord does renew His people’s youth like the eagles, and causes them to sing as in the day when He brought them up out of Egypt.

It may seem presumptuous in me thus to speak of the state of useful, active Christians; but if some are watching while others are working, they should give the result of their observations for the general good; and especially if they discover danger should give an alarm. Now this is just what I feel. I am fast nearing eternity, and am proving the deep importance of having matters clear between God and the soul. Moreover, He has been pleased to give me much close retirement with Himself and a little power of observing what is going on in the church.

Finding, therefore, many active members of the royal family shy at Court and having very little personal intercourse with the King, my heart yearns towards them, and the love of Christ constrains me to say, “My brethren, these things ought not so to be”; “Shall not God search this out? for He knoweth the secrets of the heart,” and if the searching out should be on the deathbed, and the wood, hay and stubble have to be burned up then, how bitter would it be. O I would cry mightily unto God for myself, and the whole living family, that by His Spirit He would search our hearts as with a candle, and discover to us wherein they are in any measure departing from Himself. Also that He would not let us shrink from the light when we feel some convictions of an evil, but cause us to desire and seek to know it fully, and to be brought to the light to have our deeds reprov’d, and our souls delivered as a bird from the snare of the fowler.

I earnestly desire to know the real state of my case, and to have my soul laid open to the “sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God”; for whom He loveth He woundeth, and whom He woundeth He will heal. Faithful are the wounds of this Friend, though painful; and I would rather covet them than hear Him say, Let her alone; she hath loved idols, after

idols let her go. O no, my precious Jesus, I could not bear *that*, even for a little while; I want to be continually with Thee in my own experience, to know much of Thy mind, enjoy much of Thy love, and daily to walk with Thee in endearing communion.

I want this also for the whole living family, and would especially plead for those zealous workers who are promoting every means to bring others to Thee, yet themselves rarely see Thy face or hear Thy voice, and yet are not in mourning about it. O grant them a revival, a re-quickening, a return, and a daily partaking of those fruits they are commending to others. Put in Thy pierced hand by the hole of the door of their heart, and cause their bowels to be moved for Thee (Song 5. 4), that with earnest longings they may say, "I will rise now," and go forth and "seek Him whom my soul loveth" (Song 3. 2).

O precious Saviour, we would seek Thee for them, and seek Thee with them, for our soul can never be satisfied with dwelling at Jerusalem without seeing the King's face. Shine on us, shine in us, shine through us; and in such light there will be living warmth. Bring us to sit at Thy dear feet, and lean upon Thy bosom, and through much communion with Thee to be fragrant with Thy perfumes, and thus to be refreshing to each other. Thus shall the three-one Jehovah have glory, to whom Thy poor handmaid giveth heartfelt, though feeble praise: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen, and Amen."

One word more, dearest friend. The thought arose in my mind, What is the best means to be used for one conscious of decay and longing to be restored to freshness of experience? Of course a fresh view of Jesus by faith – "Look unto Me, and be ye saved." "They looked unto Him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed"; and the place to get this view is the throne of grace: "Pour out your heart before Him." When the Lord was promising a gracious return to Israel He said, "With weeping, and with supplications will I lead them."

While thinking thus I opened the blessed Book, and was forcibly arrested with these words about the transfiguration of our blessed Lord: "And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered." O it did tell upon my heart, which went forth in earnest longings that such souls as have descended, in whom the fine gold has become dim, might, in an experimental sense, have it fulfilled in them; being by the Spirit brought into fervent prayer, and as they pray, the fashion of their spiritual countenance might be altered from dimness to brightness by the glory of their Lord arising afresh upon them, as in Isa. 60. 1, and 2 Cor. 3. 18. May we also constantly experience the same, for I feel how much we need these divine renewings. I do like to have some personal applications of what I write or say, without which we are apt to fall into a mere intellectual way of speaking or writing, which is not wholesome

for the soul, and helps to bring about the dearth we have been lamenting.

And now may He, to whom all power belongs, bless what is His, pardon what is mine, and give you that profit in reading which, to His praise I confess, He has granted me in writing. He knows how to speak a word in season. O what joy will it be to get home and see our Saviour face to face.

In Him I remain, with much warm love, your ever affectionate

Ruth [Bryan] – less than the least

High Pavement, Nottingham, March 1856

SOME SEARCHING QUESTIONS

*Notes of a sermon preached by Mr. J.M. Salmon at Cave Adullam
Chapel, Haslingden, Lancashire,
on November 24th, 1952*

Text: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2. 20).

These words were spoken by the Apostle Paul, whose name was once Saul of Tarsus. We read of him that he sat at the feet of Gamaliel and that if any man had whereof to boast, he had more. He was an Israelite, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and as touching the law, blameless. But those things that were gain to him, he counted but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord (cf. Phil. 3. 5-7). This man was great naturally, but his natural religion was nothing to him when Christ came to him. You and I here this afternoon may have plenty of natural religion, but how much “Christ” have we? That is what matters. Paul says, “For to me to live is Christ.” What is it for you and me to live in this world? Is it Christ?

“I am crucified with Christ.” What a great person that “I” is. We all possess it. We talk about “I”; we desire in the flesh that “I” should be exalted. O this terrible person “I”! Peter said, “Though all men forsake Thee, yet will not ‘I.’” This “I” boasts of great things, but the apostle says, “I am crucified with Christ.” Is your natural “I” crucified with Christ? Although once he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, he now says, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3. 8). The Pharisee says, “I am not as other men are ... unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican” (Luke 18. 11). This is the great “I” speaking. One says, “We must die to speak of Christ.” Yes,

self must be crucified, must be put in the background. We have been singing, "O crucify this self, that I no more, but Christ in me, may live."

We come to chapel. What is it for? Is it that others may see us, that the great "I" might be exalted as a religious person? Or have we come with a desire to worship the Son of God, who made Himself of no reputation, but took upon Himself the form of a servant? (Phil. 2. 7). It is wonderful to think on the personality of the Son of God. He who was with the Father in eternity; He who was the beloved Son of God; He by whom all things were made. He is and ever was the Son of God, yet, "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2. 8). He was crucified. O the agony of the crucifixion! Can you say with the apostle, "I am crucified with Christ"?

How much does it cost you to profess the name of Jesus and confess His name? How much does it cost you to be a follower of the meek and lowly Jesus? Paul says, "I die daily" (1 Cor. 15. 31), and the child of God must know what it is for the flesh to be crucified, and they that are Christ's "have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5. 24). We are living in a world when it is quite easy to live comfortably if we go with the tide. There was a day when we were even as others, dead in trespasses and sins; when we were delighted to live according to the course of this world, and were satisfied with it. We were alive to the world, but there was no living Christ in us.

This is a very personal matter. Some day we shall die. Like the grass which groweth up in the morning and in the evening is cut down (cf. Psalms 90. 5, 6). Where shall we spend eternity? Have we got a religion that brings us to think about eternity, or have we a religion that puffs up the flesh, and makes us into a "somebody"? If a man gets to be a deacon, he is somebody; if a man gets in the pulpit, he is somebody. But the one who says, "Hide me, O my Saviour, hide," wants to be hidden, wants to know nothing in this world, except the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ who came to die, to be crucified. Can you or I say, "As He was crucified, so I am crucified with Christ"? He was put out of the city; He was crucified without the gate. "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13. 13). How much reproach do we bear for the name of Christ?

In the chapter we read (Romans 6), Paul says, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" Are you living in sin? If you are you know nothing about the crucifixion, you know nothing about the fellowship of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we desire fellowship with Him, let us therefore go unto Him without the camp. May we be willing in the day of God's power. May we seek it. Even to be crucified with Christ. May we be dead to the world. "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised

up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” This is to be born again, to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God, to be washed in the precious blood of Jesus. Paul says, “Even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6. 4-6).

Whom we serve, his servants we are. Do we serve sin?

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live.” That seems to be a contradiction. “And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2. 1). “Nevertheless I live; yet not I” (not the “I” that went about persecuting the name of Christ, seeking to put the people of God to death). “Nevertheless not I, but Christ liveth in me.” Does Christ live in you? “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love” might know what is the length and height and breadth of the love of God which passeth understanding (cf. Eph. 3. 17-19).

How much do we know of the love of Christ? Well, how much do we live like Him? If we are alive unto the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall love Him accordingly. He was crucified for your sins and mine, and if we love Him, we shall be crucified to sin. Do we love the pleasures of this life and forget God, being without Christ, without God in the world, without hope, or are we crucified with Christ? The flesh will sin, it is true, but the believer has two armies within. The new nature which has been given is Christ dwelling in the heart, and if Christ lives in us, we cannot sin easily. The new man of grace will strive against the flesh, and the flesh will lust against the Spirit, and these two are contrary one to the other (cf. Gal. 5. 17).

Are you in agreement with the world, with the things of Satan? O to have union with Christ! We do rejoice at the thought of being with Him in eternity, of being forever absent from sin, but what about while we are living here? We cannot cease from sin, but is sin a grief and a burden to us? Do we mourn over it? If so we have fellowship with the Lord Jesus. The burden of the sins of the church was placed upon Him. He was the burden bearer, the sin bearer. Look at the scene at Calvary. If we still retain a hard heart, it is because we are not crucified with Christ. What effect has it upon you to think of the sufferings of Christ?

“Suffering Saviour, Lamb of God....

“We would with Thee sympathise

In Thy bitter passion.

With soft hearts and weeping eyes,

See Thy great salvation.”

Do you seek fellowship with Him? If we have fellowship with Him in glory, it must begin down here in His sufferings. Our prayer then is, "That I might know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" (Phil. 3. 10).

When we are out in the world, what does the world think about us? When we are at home, what does our family think about us? In the church, what do the members think about us? It is very nice to meet with the Lord's people on the Lord's day, easy to confess the name of Jesus Christ, very easy to read God's Word in the Lord's house, but when we are out in the world, what then? Can you then say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"? Does He live in you in the world? O that we may live before men that they may take notice of us that we have been with Jesus and learned of Him! O that we may be able to speak with our feet!

The Word of God is God's mind to us. This is God's mind. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3. 16). What is your mind to God? How do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? He loved us so much, He gave us His all, the best that heaven could produce. He gave His Son to be sacrificed for your sins and mine. Do we walk in this world as those that fear Him, not being ashamed to own our Lord or to confess His name? Not so much with our lips as our actions. Actions speak louder than words. I am not speaking a lot of free-will. Has the Lord Jesus Christ made you to differ? If so, then this prayer of Jesus was necessary on your behalf: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am" (John 17. 24).

The Lord Jesus is still despised and rejected of men in this day and generation, and if the world embraces us, it is a bad sign. What they did to the Lord Jesus Christ, they will do to them that belong to Him. Are we different from what we once were, or are we satisfied to have an easy life here, and hope for something hereafter? Christ was rejected of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Isa. 53. 3). Are we willing to be rejected with Him? Are we able to say, "I am a companion of all them that fear Him"? Are our companions those that fear the Lord? "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name" (Mal. 3. 16).

"And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Pray that your hearts may be directed to the work of the Lord Jesus at Calvary – bleeding, weeping, agonising, yet praying for sinners. "Father, forgive

them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23. 34). If our eyes are up unto Him at Calvary, we shall be saved.

The apostle, as Saul of Tarsus, sought to fulfil the law. The law came from God, and the law is good, but the law cannot save us because it is weak through our flesh, but “God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8. 3). He agonised to put sin away. What do you think of sin then? What do you think of Christ? As much as you think of Christ, so much will be your hatred of sin. You will hate it with a perfect hatred because it crucified the Lord of glory.

May God give us grace and faith to live according to His precious Word, for the Lord Jesus says: “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11. 28).

1555: THE YEAR OF MARTYRDOMS (1)

One of the most dreadful attacks ever made on God’s truth in this country reached its height 450 years ago. This was an attempt to wipe out Protestantism by the destruction of all who firmly upheld the truth of God’s Word.

Events Preceding 1555

Until but a short time before, England, like the rest of Europe, had been under the supreme sway of the Roman Catholic church. The famous monarch, Henry VIII, however, had broken free from the pope’s power. Wishing for a divorce from his wife, Catherine of Aragon, which the pope was unwilling to grant, he had in 1534 been declared by Parliament Supreme Head of the Church in England. He had clearly shown, nevertheless, that he was no lover of change in doctrine and practice. His Six Articles of 1539 punished anyone who denied the fundamental Roman Catholic dogmas. Nevertheless, he had sanctioned the placing of an English translation of the Bible in each church; and the Word of God in its purity had been received into many hearts prepared by the Lord. Many convicted, thirsty souls had hastened eagerly to the spot where that precious Book was chained to the desk and there heard for the first time the Word which made them wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus.

On Henry VIII’s death in 1547, he had been succeeded by his Protestant son, Edward VI. During this short reign, the cause of the Reformation had prospered. Lutheran and Calvinist divines had visited the country; the Word had been faithfully preached by men like Latimer, Ridley, Hooper and Bradford, and many had rejoiced in the glad tidings of the gospel.

Queen Mary

But in 1553, a dark cloud appeared on the horizon. The gracious young King Edward died, to be succeeded by his half-sister, Mary. Never has a more pitiable character sat on the English throne than this misguided queen! Bigoted yet sincere in her hatred of Protestantism, most zealous in her love to the Roman faith, she was resolved to stop at no cruelty to win back her “erring subjects.” Aided by her advisers, Cardinal Pole and Bishop Gardiner, she again proclaimed the pope head of the Church, and commanded each subject to worship according to the Roman Church. Moreover, the Queen married the King of Spain, Philip II, another fanatical Romanist. The unhappy woman was stirred to even greater efforts against Protestants in order to impress the husband to whom she was so devoted, but who showed her so little affection. Death was made the penalty for all who would not submit.

The Testing Time

The great testing-time had arrived. How slenderly the issue seemed to hang! Would those who loved the truth stand fast even unto death or would they through fear of the dreadful suffering they must otherwise endure return to the old beliefs? They were men of like passions as we are; many confessed to terrible fears of what might await them. Yet how gloriously they prevailed, and with them all for which they stood! In less than four years, up to three hundred men and women were willing to suffer. The truth of God had been burned so deeply into their hearts that they could not deny it. They were of one mind with John Rogers, the first to suffer: “That which I have preached I will seal with my blood.”

The Truth as it is in Jesus

What were these truths they counted more dear than life itself? One was the complete sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice for the sins of His people. They rested entirely on this for salvation and so abhorred the Mass, which professed to repeat that sacrifice week by week. They loved the truth of free justification by faith in Christ and so refused anything else as a means of salvation. No ceremonies, no earthly priest, no confessional were necessary; they did but turn the eyes from Christ. The Word of God had been laid upon the hearts of the martyrs with such power that nothing was desired except what God there commanded. The Roman church made every effort to persuade these martyrs to recant; the most subtle arguments were used, wonderful promises were put forward, awful threats were made, but all to no avail. We are astounded at the way in which these men and women, some very tender in years, others of no education, were able to answer the most brilliant logic and arguments of the Roman church’s leading theologians – and on the ground of God’s Word alone.

The Young Apprentice

One of the first to die was nineteen year old William Hunter. Whilst working as an apprentice silk-weaver in London, he refused to go to Mass. His master requiring him to leave, he went home to Brentwood in Essex. There the priest rebuked him for reading the Bible, forced him into an argument, and accused him of heresy. William replied that he had found great blessedness in that Book.

Realising his danger, he fled, but returned on hearing that his father would be imprisoned. Every conceivable effort was made by the authorities to cause him to recant – he was raged at by the priests, put in the stocks for two days, laid in irons, threatened with burning, and then imprisoned for nine months. Then he was offered £40 if he would give in. His reply was: “I count all worldly things but loss and dung in respect of the love of Christ.” His father and mother encouraged him to be faithful. William’s gracious words were: “For my little pain which I shall suffer, which is but short, Christ has promised me, mother, a crown of joy.” On March 26th, 1555, he was brought to the stake at Brentwood. Urged to recant, he refused. He knelt down and read Psalm 51, and then the fire was lit. In the flames he called, “I am not afraid.” Then lifting his hands to heaven he cried, “Lord, Lord, Lord, receive my spirit,” and through suffering entered glory.

The Welsh Fisherman

In the reign of Edward VI, an unlearned man had been called by God’s grace. His name was Rawlins White, a well-known fisherman in Cardiff. Never having been educated, he could not read but longed to know more deeply the Scriptures which he loved. Therefore, he sent his little boy to learn to read. Returning from his fishing outings, Rawlins would listen to the boy reading from the Bible. The truth was precious to him, and being blessed with a wonderful memory, he remembered whole passages. Having ability to explain the Word, he found many ready hearers. When Mary’s persecutions began, the poor fisherman’s testimony was still listened to privately by friends and richly blessed to the salvation of many.

At last he was imprisoned. Brought to trial, he told the Bishop of Llandaff he took his stand solely on God’s Word and humbly asked where he was wrong. He showed great courage in explaining the evil of the Mass. In the “dark, loathsome and vile prison” where he was kept, he spent his time in prayer and singing psalms. Nothing could shake him from his rock-like hold of the truth though every effort was made. Knowing that he would soon die, he sent to his wife for “his wedding garment,” meaning the shirt in which he would be burned.

On March 30th, 1555, he was put to death at Cardiff. Wearing an old russet coat and a pair of old leather leggings, this poor fisherman was brought to the stake by a great company of guards. "What meaneth all this?" he simply asked. "By God's grace, I will not start away." The sight of his wife and children broke him down, and he struck his breast and cried: "Ah, flesh! wouldst thou fain prevail? Well, I tell thee, do what thou canst, thou shalt not, by God's grace, have the victory." All stood amazed at the cheerful face of the old man as from the stake, he smiled round on them. He bade the smith chain him fast "lest flesh strive mightily." He exhorted the people. Then in much suffering, he cried continually, "O Lord, receive my soul," till he sank in the flames, and passed to eternal rest.

Many others were to follow these men of God. They found Christ's strength made perfect in their weakness.

"Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

THROUGH MANY DANGERS

*The autobiography of Isaac Lewis (1823-1896), for over twenty years
pastor at Staplehurst, Kent
(Continued from page 120)*

When I returned home, my soul was full of peace and joy in believing. As I lay down on my bed, my soul went forth in the dances of them that make merry. Truly the Father had killed the fatted calf, invited His poor, prodigal son, and commanded the best robe to be put on him. O my soul, bow into the dust of nothingness at the amazing goodness, mercy and love of thy adorable Lord and dear Redeemer. I was like David when he said, "My cup runneth over."

I was in this frame of mind for some time, when I begged of the Lord to take away the joy of my heart for a little, that I might get a little sleep to strengthen my poor body for labour on the morrow; but I also begged of Him that He would renew His visits in the morning and give me another token of His love. He assured me that He would do so. I soon fell asleep, and when I awoke I found my Lord present with me; the dew had lain all night upon the branch, as my precious Lord Jesus says in John 15, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me." For about twenty-eight days I had a sensible abiding in Him, and He in me, and I was enabled to bring forth much fruit. The fruit of the Spirit is joy and peace, flowing from the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. O what a rich gift! And

it was so fully and freely given, and so fully enjoyed, and it took away the keen appetite of nature.

On one occasion, when returning from my labour, I saw the food on my table, and I said, "Dearest Lord, I have meat to eat that the world knows nothing of." The Lord answered me, in the joy of my heart, with these words, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." My soul was enabled by precious faith to feed upon the flesh of the Son of God and to drink His blood. It was precious feeding indeed. His Word was found, and I did eat it, to the joy and rejoicing of my heart. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

O what a mercy that the Lord has put me amongst His people, and enabled me to say *us* and *we*! If He had not put me there, I should never have been there. O how full and free is salvation by grace to the lost, undone and ruined! It is when they have nothing to pay that the Lord frankly forgives them.

At this time my soul was confirmed in the great truths of the Bible and in the doctrine of the everlasting gospel of the Son of God. The doctrine of eternal election was a sweet theme to my soul. Here I saw the covenant of grace which was entered into before all worlds by the Eternal Three – Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The Father in the choice and gift, as the Son declared in the days of His flesh: "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me"; the Son in receiving and redeeming; the Holy Ghost in witnessing and sealing. There are Three that bear witness in heaven – the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; and these Three are One. We read in Ephesians 1. 13, 14: "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession: unto the praise of His glory."

I saw that this covenant, with all its provisions, was made secure by the unalterable decrees of the Eternal Jehovah – God in the Trinity of His Persons saw the whole of the election of grace as secure in this covenant as He will at the end of all things, when the last vessel of mercy will be safely housed in eternal glory. The Apostle Paul says, Before either of the children had "done good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth." Then again Christ says in John 17, "Now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was. I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy word." O sweet words, when brought home with the Spirit's power to the heart; for faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

I feel that to exhort a poor sinner to exercise faith upon the promises of God is to exhort him to the sin of presumption. O how little understood is the clean work of faith, which is the work of God the Holy Ghost in the hearts of the elect by grace, who have to go against wind and tide! Blessed be God, He has made me to know that He is not only the Giver of faith, but the Author and Finisher of faith. Sense and reason dispute every inch of the way; but faith leads the soul of a child of God from Moses to Christ, from the condemnation of the law to the liberty of the gospel, from Mount Sinai to Calvary. And at this precious spot the soul views Jesus standing in his place. He went to the very end of the law for righteousness, when He cried with a loud voice, "It is finished!" and gave up the ghost. Jesus made an end of sin, brought in an everlasting righteousness, which should be to all and upon all them that believe. This is where He magnified the law and made it honourable. He magnified the law in His life and on the cross in His sufferings, and He honoured the law in His death. He died for the sins of His people and rose again for their justification. If death could have held Jesus in the tomb, no soul could ever have reached heaven. The devil and his agents, with their limited power, tried hard to keep Him there. "Go, set a watch, and make the tomb secure." They might as well have tried to stop the sun in its daily course as to have tried to keep Christ in the tomb, for He had destroyed death, and him who had the power of death.

By the power of God the Holy Ghost, my soul was raised from a death in sin to a life of faith in Christ. But O what a contrast now! Sometimes I seem to have no faith, in feeling or judgment; all is dark within and without. I am something like poor John when shut up in prison, and sending to ask Jesus whether He was the Christ or not. What poor things we are when left to ourselves, and O what a contrary way to sense and reason God takes. At least He did so with me, to make me established and rooted in the grand truths of the gospel.

A man who attended the same chapel as myself asked me what I thought of God, as he could not understand what He was. I replied, "My friend, I believe God is incomprehensible in the divine essence, and no man by searching can find Him out. It is only by faith I am enabled to believe, to the salvation of my soul, in three divine Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and yet not three Gods, but one God. This was and ever shall be too much for sense and reason to grasp. Faith believes it, and love finds a centre place in God; for God is love." The psalmist says, "Hope thou in God: for I shalt yet praise Him."

This man went to his minister and told him what I believed, and the next time the minister was in the pulpit he spoke against the doctrine of the holy Trinity. This was like some in days of old. The weapons of his warfare were carnal, not spiritual. Truly my soul was grieved to hear

such things from a man of whom I had thought better things. I wished to speak to him; I thought him a man of wisdom, and myself a fool. O how my poor soul did cry unto the Lord that He would strengthen me and give me wisdom! How suitable to me were the words of dear old Jacob when blessing his son Joseph (Gen. 49. 24): "But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." The great Lord strengthened me again from these words: "I will make thee as a brazen wall against this people," which He applied with power.

I went to hear this minister one Lord's day morning, and what he said wounded me deeply. I felt a holy zeal for God's glory, so that when the service was over I called him aside, and asked him to explain some things he had advanced. He was angry, and talked so loud that many people came round us; and in the presence of these friends, I asked him his real belief of the Trinity. He said he believed there was only one Person in the Godhead – that Father, Son and Holy Ghost were only name and titles; for, he said, God could assume any name or office He chose by which to reveal Himself to the children of men. He quoted a few passages of Scripture to strengthen his doctrine; but it is not necessary nor desirable for me to enter upon the matter here. He asked me if I thought I should see three Gods. I replied, "No; but I do believe I shall see three glorious Persons in the undivided essence of the eternal Godhead"; and I quoted Acts 7. 55: "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God."

The minister said I was a troubler in Israel. I told him I wished to be so when such errors as his were preached. The people held with the minister; not a friend stood by me. My poor wife said, "You cause our name to stink with the people." O, this was the heaviest blow I had; it wounded me indeed! If it had been an enemy, I could have borne it; but it was from a bosom friend. But the Lord mercifully caused it to work for my good, and God's glory. I was compelled to withdraw from the scene of action into a secret spot, and there to plead with my God that if I were deceived, He would undeceive me, and that if right He would ever keep me right; when the great Jehovah, my God in Trinity, heard the groans of His poor worm, and delivered me by His Word and Spirit, as He did in days of old: "He sent His word, and healed them." And so He did my poor soul. These words were given me: "Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase." I believe the Lord has, in part, fulfilled this portion of His Word in my soul's experience, as my narrative will show. From these words my soul was made strong in Christ Jesus, and I felt determined to give battle in the name and

strength of the Lord of Hosts, to any of the perverters of my most holy faith.

I feel it is a very great mercy that the Lord has given me faith to understand His truth and love to embrace it. The root must be first, then the branches, then the fruit. David had his life in this root naturally and spiritually. Jesus sprang from the loins of David according to the flesh.

I must now say a few words about this minister, and then I desire to leave him in the hands of Him who judgeth righteously. On one occasion I had to contend against his immoral conduct, which made him so angry that he called me many hateful names. He said I was dead, and my conscience seared as with a hot iron. I felt and told him I trusted my conscience was made tender by the fear of the Lord. I told him the Lord would reprove him; which He did a short time after, for he had a fall, which shook the foundation of many who met with us, and caused grief to the living family.

When the Spirit of the living God touches mere professors with His rod, they are like the barren fig tree which Christ cursed; they wither and die. I have often thought how many men are called to support the cause of truth with their means who are not “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” Not chosen to be partakers of divine life, they would wither and die. Not so with His dear sheep, for the life He gives is eternal; so that they can never die.

(To be continued)

“Without Me ye can do nothing.” He is and ever must be everything in us, as well as everything for us, and everything to us. Without His divine communications we can neither pray, nor read, nor meditate, with any faith in living exercise; and therefore as all our springs are in Him, and as all communication from Him is through faith, the suspension of His gracious influences through the Spirit leaves us dark, barren, dry, and as if dead. But what a mercy it is for those who have an interest in the love and blood and grace of the Son of God that He changeth not, but rests in His love, is of one mind and none can turn Him, and is the same yesterday, today and for ever!

When we take a review of all the temptations, trials, sins, backslidings, wanderings and startings aside that we have been guilty of, all the hard thoughts, peevish and rebellious uprisings, with all the sad unprofitableness, backwardness to good, proneness to evil, determination to have our own will and way, and all that mass of inconsistency which sometimes seems to frighten us in the retrospect lest we be deceived altogether – I say when we look over these things, what reason we have to cling close to the precious blood and righteousness of the Christ of God, that we may find in Him a refuge from our sinful, vile and guilty selves!

J.C. Philpot

BOOK REVIEW

Contending for the Faith: E.J. Poole-Connor, by David G. Fountain; paperback; 174 pages; price £7.50; published by The Wakeman Trust, and obtainable from Metropolitan Tabernacle, Elephant and Castle, London, SE1 6SD.

This is a most profitable though sad book, which deserves to be widely read. Ably written by David Fountain, it is the life of a nonconformist minister, E.J. Poole-Connor, who lived from 1876 to 1966. But it is more than that. It is the story of the appalling spiritual decline among the nonconformists during that period.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, almost everyone, ministers and people, whatever their faults, believed in the full inspiration of Scripture, the fall, the Trinity, the virgin birth, the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the atonement, etc. But fifty to seventy years later very few did. And today these vital truths are generally denied.

What was the cause? Poole-Connor contended that it was the denial of the infallibility of Holy Scripture. His whole life was a protest against this "downgrade movement," and for the most part he stood alone. People thought things were not so bad, or that these things should be left alone. Let us be clear. Poole-Connor was not a controversial man. He always spoke and wrote in a humble, gracious, quiet way, but he felt there could be no compromise, and a voice should be raised. In his latter years, as a strict sabbatarian, he served as Chairman of the Lord's Day Observance Society, and also acted as Editor of *The Bible League Quarterly*. Because of his stand, he lost many friends and many, even professed evangelicals, scorned him.

The sad thing was that many seemingly gracious people either failed to see the importance of the issue or felt it was not their concern; and so continued to fraternize with those who were denying the truth. The end was disaster, and we need to keep this warning before us in our own churches. Time proved Poole-Connor's stand to be justified.

Originally written forty years ago, this biography has been updated. The final paragraph (a quotation from Abraham Kuyper) is very relevant:

"When principles that run against your deepest convictions begin to win the day, then battle is you calling, and peace has become sin; you must, at the price of dearest peace, lay your convictions bare before friend and enemy, with all the fire of your faith."

We have happy memories of hearing Mr. Poole-Connor preach once, when he was an old man. The text was: "Consider how great this Man," and the subject, the Melchisedec-priesthood of the Son of God.

When a sense of guilt is raised up, take heed of getting it allayed any way but by Christ's blood; all other ways tend to harden the conscience. Make Christ thy peace (Eph. 2. 14), not thy duties, thy tears, etc. Thou mayest oppose Christ by duties as well as by sins. Look at Christ alone.

Thomas Wilcox

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
JUNE 2005

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

FRET NOT THYSELF

*Sermon preached at Westminster Chapel, London, on Friday evening,
April 8th, 2005, on the occasion of the Gospel Standard Societies
Annual Meetings.*

Text: “Fret not thyself” (Psalm 37. 1).

This Psalm begins very abruptly. Really it begins with a solemn rebuke, a loving rebuke, and yet a solemn rebuke against fretfulness. But it is also a loving exhortation. There are two sides to it: a rebuke and an exhortation. And we need it.

“Fret not thyself.” We might ask the question, What is fretfulness? What is it to fret? What is it to have a fretful spirit? And, of course, it is something better experienced and felt than explained. I am sure it does not need a lot of explanation. With the Lord’s people it is not honouring to God, it is not for the honour and glory of His name. And yet, left to ourselves, all of us are guilty of it. Now what is fretfulness? To be sad? To be burdened? To be upset? To be distressed? But it goes further than that. To be agitated? To be overwhelmed by circumstances? To be consumed by things that bother us? Even to become peevish amidst it all? A spirit of fretfulness – and we are warned against it.

“Fret not thyself.” But I think of the circumstances in which this word rests with me: everything that seems to be happening at present in the world and in the country and in the church of God. And left to ourselves what a spirit we get into, and what thoughts and what feelings and what confusion – fretfulness! You think of all that is happening in Rome today. You think of all that is happening in Windsor tomorrow.* You think of all that is happening in the coming days, the General Election. You think of all the things in our churches. And you see, when we look at these things, sometimes we become so concerned and so bothered and depressed and agitated. And then people, men, what are they going to do, what are they not going to do, what confusion are they going to bring, what is Satan doing, what is Satan purposing to do? And so you see we become bothered about these things and concerned.

Well, you say, “Surely, surely it is right to be concerned.” You know, it is a narrow line between a gracious and sober concern, and an

* The funeral of Pope John Paul II was taking place that day, and the wedding of Prince Charles on the following day.

ungodly fretfulness, an ungodly concern. It is a very narrow line. Satan can deceive us, can't he? We think *this* is gracious concern and on the other hand it might be just our own spirit. Now, may we heed that word, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit," and if the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with our spirit, it will not be a peevish spirit, it will not be a fretful spirit. It may be a sad spirit, but it will be a graciously concerned spirit.

So, you see, I bring this before you in the context of all these things. But I don't want to take up our time, beloved friends, this evening with speaking at length about what is happening in Rome, and what is going to happen tomorrow in Windsor, and all the things concerning the General Election, and even all the things concerning our churches. People, things, circumstances, fears. O but left to ourselves this spirit of over-concern, over-anxiety; and the Lord calls it fretfulness, and it is not for His honour and glory.

So then this is a word of loving rebuke and it is also a word of loving exhortation. And more than that, it is a word of gracious direction. With all these things about us and in front of us and before us, what must be the attitude, what must be the spirit of the people of God?

"Fret not thyself." You know, beloved friends, when I opened my Bible to look at these three words at the beginning of Psalm 37, the first thing that caught my eye was this: "A Psalm of David. Fret not thyself." And immediately I thought, "David, surely you are the last person in the whole of the Word of God to be telling the Lord's people how they should behave and telling them not to be fretful." I thought, "David, if there is anyone anywhere in Scripture who so often, left to yourself, knew a fretful spirit, it is you, David." Now it just hit me like that. "A Psalm of David. Fret not thyself." I thought, "Who are you, David, with all the peevishness, with all the complaints, with all the over-anxiety, who are you to be exhorting the Lord's people and telling them not to be fretful, telling them not to fret themselves?"

But then as I thought on this it seemed to come like this. David would say, "Yes, I admit to it, I confess it. You don't find anyone more fretful than me in Scripture, but why do I say 'fret not thyself'?" Well, David would say, "Because I found that all my fretting never did me any good. It never brought me any blessing, it never brought me any peace, it never gave me any help, it never brought me any deliverance." So, David would say, "Yes, guilty, but it is because I *am* guilty that I am able to give this word of exhortation. O, seek grace not to fall into this sin that so often I fell into." I think David would have said, "It was much better when I was singing 'The Lord liveth; and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.' 'Fret not thyself.' Fretting did me no good. O but the Rock of my salvation did. A faithful and

unchanging God did. I have proved Him One who could hear and answer prayer. I have proved Him One who could deliver me."

But if anyone had cause for fretfulness surely David did. You think of how he was harassed by Saul, so unjustly treated by Saul. And then there is a kind of a black, shadowy background to all the Psalms. You see Ahithophel, his beloved friend, deceiving him; you see Doeg going against him so cruelly; you see Shimei cursing him. He seemed to be plagued with people, he seemed to be plagued with enemies. But David says, "Fret not thyself." And one thing David proved, and all God's people will prove it: David found he had so much against him, people against him, things against him, circumstances against him; but on one occasion he stopped and he said, "But this I know; that God is for me." And that is just it, beloved friends. You might have your Shimei against you, and your Doeg against you, and your Ahithophel against you. O but if you can come in like David, "This I know; that God is *for* me." You know, it is a wonderful thing if God is for us. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" And God is *for* His people in Christ; God is on His people's side in Christ.

"Fret not thyself." This is not just David's teaching here, it is the teaching of much of the Old Testament and much of the New, especially those gospel exhortations at the end of most of the Epistles. In the spirit of it you have this over and over again: "Fret not thyself." This solemn rebuke against over anxiety, fretfulness; and this loving exhortation, "Fret not thyself."

The Word of God gives a few good reasons for it. "Fret not thyself." Whatever is happening, whatever is likely to happen, whatever people are doing, whatever is happening in the world, whatever there is tomorrow and next week, the Word of God gives us a lot of reasons why we should "fret not" ourselves.

One is this: *that God is on the throne*. And that God who is on the throne is *our* God. He is almighty, and He is in control. "The Lord sitteth upon the flood; the Lord sitteth King forever." Nothing can ever take place apart from His divine permission. None of His purposes can ever be overthrown. He is almighty. "With heaven and earth at His command He waits to answer prayer." "He bindeth the floods from overflowing."

On one occasion Paul said, "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." The fault with us so often is this: we spend our time looking at "the things which are seen." This last week, how much of your time have you been looking at what is happening in Rome? And how much of your time have you been looking at what is going to happen in Windsor? And how much of your time have you been looking at what the politicians are saying? And how

much of your time have you been looking at what might happen at the Annual Meetings? And how much time have you been looking up to heaven and seeing God completely in control and realising “my times are in Thy hand”?

“All must come, and last, and end,
As shall please my heavenly Friend.”

Then, “Fret not thyself” as long as your God lives and reigns and the government is upon His shoulder. As long as “there is a God in heaven,” as Daniel said; as long as “there is a God in Israel,” as David said. Now, this is the answer to all the fears and anxieties and concerns and perplexities of the people of God – “Fret not thyself.”

Another reason is the *mystery of divine providence*. You can go and read that wonderful work of John Flavel, *The Mystery of Divine Providence*. But, better still, you can listen to the Lord Jesus: “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.” That is the mystery of divine providence, that God is in control. The great affairs of the nations, what is taking place in the world today, what is likely to take place; it is all beneath His sovereign control. And the smallest things: the falling of a sparrow, the falling of a leaf, the crushing of a moth: all these things in the hands of God. And His beloved people are all beneath the shadow of His divine providence. No harm can ever reach them without their heavenly Father’s permission. “Your heavenly Father knoweth.” Do you believe it? “The very hairs of your head are all numbered,” literally. And the smallest things, “My life’s minutest circumstance.” Satan can do nothing without God’s permission, and all these, the great and mighty of this world, they can do nothing, nothing without God’s permission. “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.” What do you make of that mysterious word, “The wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain”? That means that concerning all the evil and the wickedness and the venom that ungodly men and Satan plan, almighty God does one of two things: He either stops it, prohibits it; or on the other hand, if He allows it, He makes it all work together for the honour and glory of His name. O it is a great God whom we worship; it is a great God who is our God. The mystery of providence! All things in the Lord’s hand, working everything after the counsel of His will, for the honour and glory of His name and for His people’s good. If we really believed this, then we would “fret not ourselves.” “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” We do not always see it, we do not

always feel it, but we know it. But if we could see it, then we would "fret not ourselves."

There is another thing, a third thing. *The eternal safety and security of the people of God.* The Lord Jesus said, "Upon this Rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." You see, the Rock of ages, God's dear, eternal Son, stands unchangeably the same from age to age. The Rock-foundation on which His church is built. The hiding place for His people within the clefts of the Rock. The safety, the everlasting security of the people of God in Christ.

"What harm can ever reach my soul
Beneath my Father's eye?"

"Fret not thyself." O but you see, another thing. If only God's people realised *what wonderful privileges they have in Christ*, then there would not be the fretfulness. When you think of our wretched unworthiness and sin and guilt, and what we deserve. And then you think of the love of God towards unworthy sinners; and that free pardon and forgiveness; and the wonderful promise to supply all their needs; and the putting away of all their sins by the one sacrifice of Jesus; and that heaven, the eternal inheritance that is prepared for them. A little glimpse of this by faith, and there would not be the fretfulness, would there? We would be more like that poor man who was completely destitute, all he had was a bare crust; and as he tried to eat it he was overwhelmed with joy, and the tears flowed as he said, "All this and Christ too! All this and Christ too!" "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." Beloved friends, you cannot help seeing the things that are seen; you cannot help seeing what is happening in Rome; and what is happening in Windsor; and what is happening in the churches; and what is happening in the newspapers; and what is happening in politics. You cannot help seeing it. But the point is you are commanded not to look at it. You cannot help seeing it, but you are not to look at it. May the Holy Spirit "turn our eyes another way, to Jesus and His blood." "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

"Fret not yourselves." And you see, another reason. So often the Lord's people say, "Well, leaving everything that there is all around in the world and in the country, when I come to myself, my own state, my own heart, surely there is enough to fret about." There is enough to be concerned about, to be sad about; but not to fret about. Rather, through grace, to repent about and to pray about. But *the answer there is the gospel*, the gospel of the grace of God in all its wonderful fulness and all its wonderful freeness. And especially this:

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”

And if they are plunged beneath that flood, feelingly, experimentally, they will lose all their fretfulness and all their peevishness and all their complaints.

So, “Fret not thyself.” You see, first of all this evening, I am trying to speak to you about the reasons, the many reasons, that the Word of God gives, the Old Testament and the New Testament; the reasons why God’s people should not be fretful, and of course there are many more.

But now I just want to try to come to another aspect of this subject, a second aspect of this subject, “Fret not thyself.” There are the reasons, first of all, why a child of God should not be fretful, even with all these terrible things in the world and in the church and in his own heart. But the second thing: how is it possible for him, with his sinful heart, how is it possible for him *not* to be fretful? Now really David here is like a very wise physician. He discerns what the malady is: fretfulness; he lays his finger on it, fretfulness. But like a good physician he does not leave it there; he prescribes a remedy. And the remedy for fretfulness that David prescribes here is fourfold. It is a fourfold remedy. So there is the solemn rebuke, “Fret not thyself.” Then there are all these reasons why God’s people should not be fretful. Ah but, they say, “I am. How can I stop it? How can I help it? What is the remedy? What is the antidote?” And David tells us. He says, “Fret not thyself.”

1. The first part of David’s antidote to fretfulness, verse 3: “Trust in the Lord.” If the Holy Spirit blesses us with a spirit of sweet confidence in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, if the Holy Spirit enables us to trust in Him, then that will be the answer to these fears and anxieties and this trouble and this confusion. It is the vital element in living faith – trusting in the Lord. There is a dead faith, an empty faith. It believes that Jesus is the Son of God, He died, He rose again, He ascended into heaven, He ever lives. But the devil believes that. But in the devil’s faith, or in a vain, empty faith, there is this element lacking: there is not any trust, there is not any confidence. “Fret not thyself.” “Trust in the Lord.” Trust in His faithfulness to help you, to uphold you, to be with you, never to leave you nor forsake you. Trust in His precious promises. When you feel your sin and guilt seek the Spirit’s help to trust in His precious sin atoning blood.

“Trust in His efficacious blood,
Nor fear thy banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee,”

says our hymnwriter. Now, this is the antidote. If we are enabled to look to the Lord, if we are enabled to trust in Him; to trust Him as a faithful, unchanging Friend; to trust His merit and righteousness and precious blood.

“Trust Him, He will not deceive you,
Though you hardly of Him deem;
He will never, never leave you;
Nor will let you quite leave Him.”

So David tells us that is the first part of the remedy that he prescribes, a sweet confidence in the God of all his mercies as enabled by the Spirit of God.

2. “Fret not thyself.” And the second part of his antidote, “Fret not thyself”; but you say, How David? Verse 4, “Delight thyself also in the Lord.” When we are delighting in the Lord then there is not much room for fretfulness, is there? If we are enabled to delight in the person of the Lord Jesus, if we can delight in Him like the church in the Song of Solomon, “He is the chiefest among ten thousand ... He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.” But you know, when our hearts are in a good frame, we *do* delight ourselves in the things of God, don’t we? Ruth, amidst all her sorrows and all Naomi’s sorrows, delighted in the things of God, and that stopped her from fretting herself, and that brought her right out of Moab to Bethlehem.

“Delight thyself also in the Lord.” And you know what God’s people so often say. They say, “O Lord, I *would* delight in Thee.” You see, there is love in it, there is affection, there is reverence, there is godly fear. “All Thy ways I’d well approve.” To delight ourselves in the Lord. “Ah!” says David, “it is not only that. It is not just an antidote to that fretful spirit, but if you are sweetly enabled to ‘delight thyself in the Lord,’ ‘He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.’” Now then, that will sort us out, won’t it? Beloved friends, what are the desires of your heart tonight? You know what you *should* say, what you *ought* to say. But, as Philpot says, a child of God left to himself, the chief desire of his heart is either to get out of the trouble he is in or else to obtain that worldly benefit he is so concerned about. But in our right minds when we feel our need, when eternity is solemn, when we are under the influence of grace, what is the desire of our hearts? Do I hear someone here this evening (I am sure I do) say, “I will tell you what the desire of my heart is: ‘That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.’ O if that be granted then I will adore the Lord’s most gracious hands.” Well, it is part of this antidote that is prescribed against this

peevish, wrong, troubled, fretful spirit. “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”

3. What is the third part of the remedy? It is a well-known verse, a well-proved verse. Verse 5: “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.” In other words, prayer, the throne of grace, the blood-sprinkled mercy seat. When you are so concerned about these things around and within and in front and behind, perhaps seeming to smother you and overwhelm you, then to be enabled to betake yourself to the throne of grace and there to “commit thy way unto the Lord.” That is, in the sweet simplicity of a child to put everything into the hands of the Saviour. “Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord.”

“My soul into Thy arms I cast;
I trust I shall be saved at last.”

“Commit thy way unto the Lord” – *thy* way, that which lies so heavy on your spirit. When you went to bed last night – that which was weighing you down. When you woke up – that which was exercising your heart. When you think of tomorrow and this coming week and the future and the unknown way, and perhaps it fills you with all this anxiety and even fretfulness.

“Commit thy way unto the Lord,” that which lies closest to your heart. Especially your way in grace, your way concerning salvation, your way concerning your journey’s end. “Commit thy way unto the Lord,” into the hands of a gracious God – for Jesus’ sake – on mercy’s grounds – through His precious blood. And then thy way in providence. Well, we have been talking about all these things happening in Rome and Windsor and the Election and the churches. But these other things: it may be disappointment, loneliness, fears, illness, something in your family, something in your relationship with other people. You know what it is, and the Lord says, “thy way”: “Commit thy way unto the Lord.” You feel what love and what mercy and what kindness that the great God of heaven allows a poor, unworthy, guilty sinner to come in the sweet simplicity of faith and commit his way into the Lord’s hand.

“Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring *it* to pass.” Now what is your “*it*” tonight? Your *it* is probably different from my *it*, and my *it* is different from your *it*, but you are sweetly enabled to commit it into the Lord’s hand. “He shall bring *it* to pass.”

“‘Cast,’ he said, ‘on Me thy care;
’Tis enough that I am nigh;
I will all thy burdens bear;
I will all thy needs supply.’”

Then, “Fret not thyself.” You know, David had a lot of grace. I know he was writing by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, but he had a lot of

grace, hadn't he? He discerns this problem. He has known it himself. He has been troubled by it. He has been guilty of it: fretfulness, being swallowed up by all these cares, being too bothered by them. "Fret not thyself." And one by one he opens up the remedy, the fourfold remedy: "Trust in the Lord ... Delight in the Lord ... Commit thy way unto the Lord ... Rest in the Lord." And you know, beloved friends, it would be a very blessed thing if we were enabled by faith to take David's remedy.

4. But this last part of it, verse 7: "Rest in the Lord." If only we could rest in His will,

"Who cannot do but what is just,
And must be righteous still."

If only we could rest in His merits. If only we could rest in the Saviour's arms. If only we could by faith hear Him saying, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." One thing you do not need me to tell you this evening is that when you have this anxiety and confusion and perplexity and fretfulness, there is not much rest, is there? Not much rest for your spirit. How beautiful a word like this: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."

"O that I now the rest might know,
Believe and enter in!"

Our hymnwriter, singing of the blood-bought church of God says,

"And pressed with sorrows and with sins,
On her beloved Lord she leans."

And there she finds faith's resting place. Like Noah's weary dove, striving to enter the ark, and Noah reached out his arm and pulled her in. And there are so many like that, like Noah's weary dove, longing to find the ark, and yet so weary: shall they ever get there? shall I ever enter in? We need a greater than Noah to reach out His gracious, almighty arms and pull us in.

"Draw us to His loving breast;
There to find the gospel rest."

Then, "Fret not thyself." A loving rebuke, a loving exhortation; and he gives so many reasons for it. And then he gives this gracious antidote to enable a sinner to fight against this fretfulness: "Fret not thyself."

Well, in a word it is this. The blessed safety of the people of God in Christ. In a sense, the New Testament counterpart of "Fret not thyself," is what we heard this afternoon: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me." That is the New Testament counterpart of "Fret not thyself." "Let not your heart be troubled" – "Fret not thyself" – "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." Trust

completely to Me, leave everything in My hands, all will be well. For whatever Satan may do and whatever wicked men may do, God's people are safe in Christ, eternally safe in Christ, one day to be landed safe in heaven. And, let us be clear, beloved friends, there will not be any fretfulness in heaven. When God's people see the Lamb of God, not by faith but by sight, without a veil between, and when we can thank and praise and bless Him eternally, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain ... and hath redeemed us to God by His blood," there will not be any fretfulness in heaven. And what a mercy, an unspeakable mercy, if the Lord in His love, amidst all these things that trouble, try and distress us, if He kindly delivers us from this spirit of anxiety, confusion, distress, fretfulness!

"Fret not thyself."

THE GOSPEL STANDARD SOCIETIES

Report of the Annual Meetings of the Gospel Standard Societies held on Friday, April 8th, 2005, at Westminster Chapel, London

MORNING PRAYER MEETING

Mr. T.J. Rosier (Pastor, Maidstone) read Hebrews 6, verses 13 to 20.

We regret that the first part of the prayer meeting address was not recorded. In his opening remarks, Mr. Rosier spoke of God's promise to Abraham; that all the families of the earth would be blessed in his Seed. He spoke of grace being a sovereign act of God in calling His elect people from all the families of the earth. He said that believers are eternally safe, and the Lord Jesus has ascended up into heaven, and as their great High Priest intercedes for them. He also quoted from hymn 395.

The recorded part of the address is as follows:

Consider the present situation. We cannot let it pass by without observing what is taking place in the earth. The powers of antichrist are spreading their tentacles upon the face of the whole world. The idolatry that is taking place this day in Rome at the funeral of the pope! Our heir to the throne, the crown Prince is there, our Prime Minister is there, and the world leaders are there among the idolaters. Idolatry – the love of everything but the great King. O blindness, darkness! And then we look at our own land; our heir to the throne is walking contrary to the Word of God and really contrary to the constitution according to our parliamentary laws. A General Election is taking place, and so many

people making promises, but the Word of God says, "All men are liars." We have rulers and those who aspire to be rulers that cannot be trusted. And then we see such solemn things in Zion.

What is the hope of the church? What is the hope of the believer and the seeking soul? Well, the prophet Isaiah directs us: "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken." We live in solemn times and we wonder what our dear young friends and our dear children will live to see. But there is only one thing that is vital and saving: the work of God. We read in the portion in Hebrews of the work of God, which is the operation of God in a man's soul. A believer builds his hope upon the Lord Jesus, and the swearing of God by Himself and the promises made. Now this hope is a blessed hope which we have; a hope that entereth within the veil. The religion of the Holy Ghost today is the same religion which Abraham had. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." He sought a better country, that is an heavenly.

What do we see outside of Zion? Well, we see confusion and darkness, death and weeping, cruelty and torment. O we see damnation and the curse upon everything outside a precious Jesus. "Heaven and earth shall" – it is divinely certain – "*shall* pass away: but My words shall not pass away." As we sang just now:

"Had I a glance of Thee, my God,
Kingdoms and men would vanish soon;
Vanish as though I saw them not,
As a dim candle dies at noon."

Who would have thought fifty years ago that we would live to see a government that promotes such open wickedness, and our royal house, our crown Prince and our Prime Minister going to commit fornication with the man of sin? But O may we look upon Zion.

Now briefly, to look at these sacred verses that we have read. "When God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself." He has declared His beloved Son to be that prince Emmanuel, the sinner's Surety. O He swore, and these are the two swearings that the apostle here alludes to: "Thou art My Son; today have I begotten Thee." And all for sinners, all for sinners stricken! And secondly: "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." This was all for sinners! The eternal Son of God lives and reigns. He has no beginning and no end, eternally subsisting with the Father and with the Holy Ghost. God having made promise to Abraham, whom He called alone; called him out to seek a better country. It was a work of grace.

And now you see, the promise that we have set before us was to those that have fled for refuge. And only those sinners in the earth fleeing for refuge can have any real, solid, everlasting hope. O these promises are indeed sealed by the precious blood of Jesus. And His word shall stand for the fleeing sinner, the confessing sinner, and the poor, needy, helpless sinner who is searched through and through about himself. O he has to face the truth about himself: his love of the world, his love of sin, his love of everything but God. He is afraid to die. He is afraid to continue. He is afraid to continue in the church of God at times, and often overwhelmed in grief. And all the earthly blessings that he receives by the kind hand of God shall be taken away one by one, and at last he must come down to the hour and to the article of death. But God has sworn – that is the hope of the true believer. That is the hope, I believe, that has ever been preached in our churches. And O that that precious gospel might yet be clothed with power under the sweet influence and power of the Holy Ghost.

So we read, “That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, *we* might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge.” You who are fleeing this day in all your troubles and griefs and woes – this is written that though you are perplexed and vexed and overwhelmed you “might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” It has been set before us in the Word of God. It is set before the sinner by the Holy Ghost. Yea, the truth is written in his heart. He knows the calling, something of the power and the sweetness of the truth felt in his soul, and O, he looks to that heavenly Friend. He looks to God’s own Lamb. He looks to Him whom he believes to be the Blessed One. “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul.”

Dear friends, no man can steady the church of God. But O the foundation is sure for ever. As we read in the prophet Isaiah: “Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste” – one of Jehovah’s *shalls*. He that really looks to Christ and humbly confesses and who waits upon Him and trusts alone in Him, he shall never, never be confounded, come what may. Although so many things seem to be shaking, yet we read how the apostle says that “we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Jesus has entered into heaven with His own blood, and He sits there. Yes, He has sat down for ever. He has finished Zion’s salvation. He sits as King for ever, as we read in the Psalm: “The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever.” “Which hope we have,” we fleers, we who are seeking Him, the lovely blessed Son of God, Emmanuel God with us. “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul,

both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” So our hope you see, is not built on earthly things, or ourselves, but alone upon Him who has sat down, who has shed His blood, who was buried, rose the third day, and has ascended having conquered all principalities and powers. He has abolished death, He has bruised Satan with an incurable bruise, He has made an open and a free way for poor, needy sinners.

Well, I believe if we are taught of the Lord, we shall feel our need, our desperate need. I believe that the blessed Spirit will direct us to our only Surety, our heavenly Friend, who is God’s own Lamb of God’s own providing for sinners.

“For sinners, Lord, Thou cam’st to bleed;
And I’m a sinner vile indeed;
Lord, I believe, Thy grace is free,
O magnify that grace in me.”

“Whither the Forerunner is for us entered.” My dear friends, the Lord has entered in. “His eternal thought moves on His undisturbed affairs.” May we be helped to look up this day and all the coming days of our short lives and wait patiently for the Lord. Abraham waited twenty-five years for the fulfilment of the promise and then he was tried again.

O my dear friends, may we be helped then, like Abraham, to trust in Him. We think of course, of all that is going on in Rome today. Then we think of how Luther was blessed when he was going up the steps at Rome, how the Lord sounded the blessed word of life into his soul: “The just shall live by his faith.” O may we be helped then as a people, and as individuals, to look up and to believe that Jesus is the blessed One and humbly to trust and wait upon Him for all that is in Him for sinners.

Hymns 480, 405, and 395 were sung during the prayer meeting. Mr. Rosier prayed at the beginning, and the following prayed: Mr. R.W. Woodhams (Pastor, Rotherfield), Mr. P. Hill (Manchester), Mr. B.E. Izzard (Pastor, Fenstanton), Mr. M.P. Hydon (Attleborough), Mr. S. Hope (Chippenhams), Mr. Jabez Rutt (Blackboys), Mr. Rosier closing in prayer.

AFTERNOON MEETING

After the singing of hymn 1139, the Chairman of the Societies, Mr. G.D. Buss, called on Mr. J.E. Rutt (Pastor, Matfield) to seek the Lord’s blessing on the meetings.

The Chairman then read Philippians chapter 2, verses 1 to 15.

CHAIRMAN: It may be asked by some of you why Paul needed to write to the church at Philippi as he did. Paul as you know in Romans 7

knew a lot about himself and was writing as a man of experience, knowing, that unless the Lord kept him in the spirit of Christ, he would be guilty of the very things against which he spoke in this chapter I have read. And, friends, what Paul felt about himself is surely true of every one of us here this afternoon who know enough of our hearts.

I thought in meditation about that time in the Second Book of the Kings when the prophets were gathering meal and they gathered some wild gourds and cast them into the pot. When the meal was served, ah! there was death in it. The dear prophet Elisha had an answer. It was to cast some meal into the pot and it became palatable and all the poison was taken out of it. Well, you may ask, what is the meal? What is that that takes out the poison? What is that that counteracts the Fall in each one of us? It is what we read of in this chapter this afternoon: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." O dear friends, when we are in that mind (and how each one of us need it, none more than the man speaking to you now this afternoon!), when we are in that mind then, blessed be God, it is like the meal cast into that pot and there is no harm. We are then, as we read: "Blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."

May God give us such grace. And this afternoon the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with our spirit.

Hymn 248 was then sung

The Chairman welcomed those present to the 133rd Annual General Meeting of the Gospel Standard Aid Society and the 128th Annual General Meeting of the Gospel Standard Poor Relief Society. He then stated:

1. Anyone asking a question should raise his hand and then come to one of the microphones in the aisles.
2. Questions are welcomed, not statements.
3. No inter-church matters can be discussed. Anyone wishing to discuss with the Committee any matter about inter-church relationships should write to the Secretary.

The published Report of the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Societies was not read. Copies can be obtained from the Secretary (for address, see cover page ii).

The Secretary, Mr. H. Mercer, spoke as follows:

MR. MERCER: Mr. Chairman and dear friends:

The Committee's report, published with the Annual Report and Accounts, provides a review of the work of the Societies during 2004 and the purpose of this report is to provide the subscribers with an update to it.

Whilst many of the difficulties that the Committee experienced during the past year continue, it humbly acknowledges the Lord's mercies enabling it to persevere. The prayerful support of a large number of friends is much appreciated, and there have been many expressions of concern that the Lord

would be pleased to grant all needed help today in each part of our gathering. The prayer of many is that the Lord's presence might be felt and enjoyed here at these meetings.

The Committee may not always appear to be very active, but you can be assured that there are many issues on each agenda for the quarterly meetings of the Committee which take time and much prayerful consideration. The lightness and ease which has crept into our churches, the error in doctrine which has made itself known in some places, and the spirit of contention which is manifest in some, causes us to fear for the future of our group of churches as a denomination.

Over the years many of our ministers and friends have been concerned about our spiritual decline and we are reminded of Mr. Raven's last address at the Manchester Meetings in 1953 when he spoke from: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim 4. 16). Mr. Raven referred to the Epistle of Hebrews and stressed that "we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." He said that the expression "let them slip" signifies an imperceptible drift and that people may imperceptibly, unsuspected by themselves, drift away from the truth. He said that churches do not fall at once from the truth; it is a gradual process, very insidious at its beginning. There creeps in a lack of care or concern as to any experience of the life and power of the truth. People are content with the form, content to hear doctrine stated, but have no concern as to the experience of its life and power in their souls or the fruit of it in their lives. People may go on in that way and not perceive where they are drifting to. Churches may drift thus and become satisfied with a letter ministry. A man may speak words of truth but yet there may not be a right dividing of the Word. How needful it is that those solemn admonitions spoken over fifty years ago should be taken to heart in 2005! Where is the spiritual prosperity in our churches and in our own souls? These are the matters that concern the Committee.

The financial position of the Societies remains strong with most of the funds now invested in short-term deposits. Government stocks have matured and the funds have been reinvested at competitive interest rates. After revaluing the few investments that are still held, there was a surplus last year of £3,696. The income and expenditure during the first three months of this year is similar to the identical period last year. Because of the generosity of an anonymous donor, for which we are very grateful, the cost of holding the Annual General Meetings here at Westminster Chapel has been almost provided. The gift was made for the specific purpose of covering the expense of the Annual General Meetings and was made under Gift Aid provisions.

The notes to the accounts give additional information on the figures set out on pages 12 and 13 of the Annual Report, and on pages 20 to 23 the statement of financial activities and the balance sheet is analysed between the various funds.

Grants are paid by the Aid Society and the Poor Relief Society according to the personal financial circumstances of each recipient, and shortly each case will be reviewed to ensure that where there is need, assistance within the rules is provided. Distributions are made from the Gadsby Memorial Christmas Fund in November of each year, and once again the Committee would remind pastors and deacons to notify the Secretary of any cases of need by returning the forms that are sent out. The Convalescent Fund has not been used and the purpose for

which this Fund was set up appears largely to have disappeared. The Committee will be looking to merge the Convalescent Fund with the Poor Relief Society funds, because the objects of the Poor Relief Society will adequately cover the needs of friends who have been sick.

The Magazine Fund has shown a surplus again this year. You will observe that the cost of publication of the magazines has fallen from £39,045 in 2003 to £32,323 in 2004. The circulation is almost the same as two years ago and the cost of the magazines for UK subscribers last increased in 2003. Savings in the cost of publication arise from the use of modern technology because we now email both the *Gospel Standard* and the *Friendly Companion* to our printers. The cost saving arises because previously Chandler's the printers prepared the text from material supplied to them. The Gospel Standard Trust has continued to make a payment to the Magazine Fund which has been of great help in ensuring that the price of the magazines should not increase.

The Committee is thankful for the continuing publication of the *Gospel Standard* and *Friendly Companion* each month and would acknowledge the Lord's goodness in strengthening our Editors in this arduous task. Few realise the continuing exercise to publish sound material which it is desired, under the Lord's blessing, might be profitable to our many readers. May we each be helped to pray that the Lord would continue to own and bless the Editors' labours.

We would again encourage those who love and hold to our position, and who are not yet subscribers, to join. May many of our younger friends be led to subscribe and to hold fast to the truths that we believe. Forms of application are found at the back of the chapel.

Sadly we hear of one and another of our chapels being closed and we are therefore witnessing a gradual shrinkage in the number of our causes. May we be concerned about this, and also remember the Lord's exhortation to pray the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth labourers into His harvest. May the Lord equip and thrust forth men of God to stand on Zion's walls. It is a day of much discouragement, but still there are here and there evidences that the Lord is working, and we are thankful that although the Holy Spirit is largely withheld because of our sins and backslidings, He has not completely withdrawn.

The Committee sincerely appreciates the prayerful support of our friends at home and overseas, not only in the practical way of supporting the funds financially, but by their prayers for the Committee in these difficult times. May the Lord in much mercy return in power amongst us and grant a personal and collective spiritual reviving. "Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?"

The Chairman thanked the Secretary, and especially for all that he does for the Societies and the Committee throughout the year.

An opportunity was given for questions, but none were asked.

It was proposed by Mr. M.D. Ridout (Southampton) and seconded by Mr. K.M. Price (Kendal) that the Report and Accounts of the Gospel Standard Societies for 2004 be approved and adopted. This was carried *nem con*.

The published Report of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund was not read. Copies can be obtained from the General Secretary (for address, see cover page xiv).

The Bethesda Secretary, Mr. T.H.W. Scott, spoke as follows:

MR. SCOTT: Mr. Chairman, supporters and dear friends. This is the 60th Annual Report of the Bethesda Fund and it is a cause of gratitude to God that our lot has been maintained over such a long period. There have been many social and political changes in that time, but we are able to raise our Ebenezer and say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." I do not need to go through the Report in any degree of detail as you can, of course, read it at your leisure, and I will always be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Just to mention then one or two of the more important matters. First, the substantial gift received on the sale of Shaftesbury Avenue chapel which has added £33,913 to our income this year. Sadly, legacies continue to decline and were this year the lowest level for 24 years. On the other hand, both investment income and voluntary contributions were higher than the previous year. During the year the Fund's reserves fell by about £95,000.

The expense of running the Homes continues to increase, particularly in the area of employment costs. From April 2004 a revised wages scale was brought into effect when Bethesda rates of pay were brought more into line with the NHS revised pay and conditions which were set out in their publication *Agenda for Change*. This has, of course, had an effect on our costs. In some areas it is very difficult to attract staff, particularly at Hove and at Tunbridge Wells, where there is a lot of competition for care workers and also for domestic staff. In some Homes we have had to rely quite heavily on agency staff to provide the necessary cover. Certainly staffing, particularly at a senior level, is one of our Home Managers' chief worries, and as last year I would appeal to anyone who may feel that they have a call to this type of work prayerfully to consider whether their future might lie in Bethesda.

It now costs £450 a week to keep a resident in a Bethesda Home. Of this, over 70% is the cost of staffing. The Bethesda fees increased from April 1st this year to £360 per week. That is the basic rate, as some residents with higher needs do pay more, but you can see that there is still a large gap between what is being charged and what is the true cost. This is why we particularly value the donations from our supporters and also chapel collections.

The Bethesda Fund Committee met six times last year. I would just mention that Mr. Michael Ridout joined the Committee in September and also agreed to serve on the Brighton Home Management Committee.

We have been sorry to lose two of our Home Managers during the year. First, Mrs. Paula Matrunola Hills left the Brighton Home in early September. As many of you know, Paula was extremely ill but we are very thankful that her baby girl was safely delivered and is now making good progress. Then on March 31st, Mrs. Heather Brown retired as the Home Manager of the Harpenden Home. Altogether Heather had worked at Harpenden for a period of 23 years and was Home Manager for the last nine years of that period. We do thank her for that long period of loving service to Bethesda and wish both her and her husband every blessing in the future. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love." At Brighton, Mrs. Jean Feaver, who has worked at the Home for eight years, is continuing as Acting Manager until an appointment can be made. At Harpenden, we are pleased to say that Mrs. Susan Verweij has been appointed as Home Manager from April 1st, and application to register her as the Manager with the Commission for Social Care Inspection will be made shortly.

It is now a requirement under the National Minimum Standards that the registered manager of a care home must hold a care qualification and a management qualification to the level of NVQ4. In addition, a prospective Home Manager must have had at least two years' experience in a care establishment and this does preclude any nurse coming straight from a hospital scene to be a manager of one of our Homes.

There has been some concern whether Bethesda might be affected by the Charities Bill which was published last December. The Bill proposes a re-definition of what constitutes a charity, but it does seem that the charitable objectives of Bethesda will remain within the proposals: that is, the relief of those in need through age. Perhaps of more concern has been the concept of public benefit. The question has to be asked whether a charity set up to support a narrowly defined group of people can be said to be for the public benefit. Can there be public benefit when access is denied to a wider cross-section of the public? The debate at this time has mainly focused on hospitals and fee-paying schools and we shall have to wait and see how the matter progresses.

The Committee is seriously concerned at the large number of vacancies in the Homes. At the moment we have nineteen vacant places throughout Bethesda, which is over a quarter of our beds. Remarkably the Tunbridge Wells Home has remained completely full for a very long period, although many of the residents are now in extreme old age. I have to say that we are very exercised as to the future, as the running of four small Homes is administratively extremely demanding, as well as very uneconomical. Most new Homes being built today are for at least forty, fifty or even sixty beds whereas our largest Home has twenty-three and the smallest has thirteen. With the declining numbers in the denomination it does seem clear that some hard decisions will need to be made in the very near future.

The question of mental frailty is being looked at more closely by the inspectors, and cases we would normally in the past have been happy to accept into a Bethesda Home may no longer be possible. In some Homes there has been pressure to apply for a variation in our registration to include those with advanced dementia, but to be registered in that category does imply a level of specialist provision that Bethesda may not be able to meet. It has always been Bethesda's aim to care for residents to the end, and that is still their aim, but regulation is more strict today than it was and we may be forced in extreme cases to lose residents to more specialist care.

It is always a privilege to care for the Lord's servants. During the past year Mr. Joseph Short passed away in the Studley Home in June at the age of 91, having been a resident at Studley for seven and a half years.

We do not wish to overlook the flatlets at Redhill and Harpenden. There is one vacant flatlet at both places and if anyone is interested, then please do get in touch with me.

We again wish to thank the many volunteers who help the Homes in numerous ways. Each Home has a Home Support Group that meets three or four times a year and helps the Home in any way it can. At the end of January Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Walder resigned from the Home Support Group at the Brighton home. I believe they attended their first meeting in 1982 and so they have served for over 22 years. Mrs. Pauline Watts, the wife of my predecessor Mr. John Watts, also resigned from the Harpenden Home Support Group at the end of the

year. We thank all these people for the interest they have taken in the Homes and residents.

One particular group of volunteers we would like to thank is the people who drive the minibuses and take the residents to the chapel services. Some difficulties are being experienced with staff driving the minibuses because the younger members of staff with the newer-style driving licences do not have the automatic entitlement to drive a minibus that those with older licences do, and so our volunteer drivers are particularly valued. We are pleased that some of the younger men are helping the Homes by taking reading and prayer on Saturday mornings, and this has been a great help in maintaining the reading rotas.

So we come to the end of another year's work. I suppose every age has expressed the concern that things have never been so solemn or so difficult. Once recently, feeling somewhat discouraged one day, I came across these words: "They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage." I felt how many in our denomination do still support the work in many ways and their loving interest means so much, particularly a kind word perhaps to the managers and staff of the Homes. Above all, we want to feel the Lord's approbation on the work, and we want to look to Him to supply all our needs both now and in the future.

The Chairman thanked the Secretary for his Report and for all that he does.

An opportunity was given for questions, but none were asked.

It was proposed by Mr. J.W. Stevens (South Moreton) and seconded by Mr. D.J. Lawson (Clifton) that the Report and Accounts of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund for 2004 be approved and adopted. This was carried *nem con*.

The next item was the re-election of the Committee.

Mr. David Goodge (Lakenheath) said he had some questions to ask, believing that the Lord had told him to speak. He mentioned there being no "Any Other Business" on the Agenda.

When being reminded that the resolution before the Meeting was the re-election of the Committee, Mr. Goodge referred to Rule 4 of the Society, enrolled in the High Court of Justice, Chancery Division, March 13th, 1876, and said we have no representative from the Northern churches.

The Chairman suggested to Mr. Goodge that the kind and courteous thing to do is to give notice beforehand if something fundamental is to be raised.

Mr. Goodge also stated that the subscribers assume that the Committee is formed for the distribution of charity funds, nothing else.

The Chairman explained that this is the first object, but the Committee also have a list of chapels and ministers to maintain.

Mr. Goodge then proposed that the Committee should not be re-elected *en bloc* as *en bloc* is not democratic.

Mr. R.W. Woodhams (Pastor, Rotherfield) then proposed that we carry on at this meeting to elect the Committee as we always have done, at least for this year. This was seconded by Mr. R.K. Wheatley (Pastor, Cranbrook).

The proposition, being put to the Meeting, was carried by a very large majority.

The resolution was then put by the Secretary: for the re-election of the Committee which was elected at the Annual General Meeting last year with the exception of Mr. M.D. Ridout who resigned on October 8th, 2004. The retiring members who seek re-election are Mr. G.D. Buss, Mr. D.J. Christian, Mr. J.H. Cottington, Mr. R.D.G. Field, Mr. J.A. Hart, Mr. G.W. Hyde, Mr. J.E. Pack, Mr. D.J. Playfoot, Mr. T.J. Rosier and Mr. T.H.W. Scott.

It was proposed by Mr. T.W. Hope (Pastor, Ripley) and seconded by Mr. M. Hyde (Tenterden) that the persons whose names have been read be re-elected to serve on the Committee for the ensuing year. This was carried by a substantial majority, there being four votes against.

The Chairman asked Mr. T.J. Rosier to reply to the vote of confidence in the Committee.

Mr. T.J. Rosier replied to the vote of confidence on behalf of the Committee, thanking the friends and seeking their prayerful interest. He stated that the members of Committee do try to do all things in the fear of God and in a just and tender way.

The Chairman addressed Mr. Goodge and said that if he put in writing the points he wished to make, they would be considered at the next Committee Meeting.

The Chairman reported greetings received from the U.S.A. from Mr. J.K. Stehouwer and Mr. Gary TenBroeke, and expressed pleasure at the presence of Mr. Michael Pickett (Pastor, Choteau) at the Meeting.

An announcement was made concerning a list of surplus books for sale at the Gospel Standard Library, and also concerning the Annual Meeting of the Gospel Standard Trust at Swavesey on Saturday, May 21st.

The date for the 2006 Annual Meeting will appear in the June *Gospel Standard* as there is some uncertainty at present.

Warm thanks were expressed to all who helped practically in the arrangements for this year's Annual Meetings.

CHAIRMAN: Now after the singing of the next hymn it is my privilege and pleasure to welcome our beloved friend, the Lord's dear servant, Mr. C.A. Wood of Tamworth Road, Croydon to address us yet once more. Some of us remember the former addresses he was enabled to give in years gone by and they still remain in our hearts, and we do hope he may feel in his own soul, and we in ours, that precious union of the Spirit that we all desire to feel.

Hymn 481 was then sung.

MR. WOOD: "May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of our hearts, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer. Amen."

It is my humble, earnest desire, in utter dependence upon my Lord, that I may be helped to speak to you this afternoon about Jesus. My mind is stirred. I had accepted in writing the call to the pastorate at Tamworth Road. I was then attacked by the enemy of souls. I was knocked down. What right have you to accept it? Tested about my own

faith, let alone preaching, let alone being a pastor. Many a groan, many a cry unto my God, who set me free and overturned the devil's accusations in these words: "Jesus only." First, the hope, my only hope, of salvation as a poor, guilty, lost, filthy, vile, unworthy sinner. Secondly, that by the grace of God the only name that I would desire to preach to sinners. And then, lastly, very sweet it was, that the dear people to whom I was to journey and minister, their desire would be "Jesus only."

I seek therefore to draw your prayerful attention to the Gospel according to John, chapter 14, we read verses 1, 2 and 3. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

These are the words of our beloved Saviour, the Friend of sinners, the good Shepherd of the sheep, spoken, not only to those dear eleven disciples, but to all His people to the end of time as the Saviour prayed: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word." As the dear Saviour was drawing nearer and nearer to Calvary's cross, to that hour to which He oft referred, He was to pour out His soul unto death. He now poured out from His heart words of love to all His dear people because He loved them. To show that love He was going to die for them, He was going forth to the cross.

"Let not your heart be troubled." These eleven dear men believed in the Lord God Almighty of the Old Testament. Now He says, you believe in Jehovah, believe also in Me. "Let not your heart be troubled." He was troubled. The dear Saviour said, "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause" – for you and me, poor guilty sinners – "for this cause came I unto this hour."

"Let not your heart be troubled." We have heard rightly today of the solemn state of the world, nations, this country and the state of Zion, of much that is false in teaching, error, the power of the papacy, eastern religions, and the powers of evil set forth. But what a blessed word is this Jesus said: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Our dear friend in prayer quoted: "Alleluia: the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." God grant us grace ever to look above the dark scenes of earth to our great all-glorious Jehovah in heaven.

The dear Saviour says in the words before us, "In My Father's house are many mansions," setting forth beyond anything that we can fully contemplate or rightly consider the fulness, the blessings, the

provision for a never-ending eternity for all the redeemed by that precious, sin-atonement blood of the dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Thinking of this provision, it came rather sweetly to my poor heart, when on earth He said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." O beloved friends, these mansions. Ah, but it has often been said by God's dear children, "Lord, we thank Thee for the mansions but it is Thyself. *Thou art heaven to our souls.*"

"If it were not so, I would have told you." I trust here that my memory is correct. I remember Mr. Frank Gosden stating how he visited one of God's dear children as he was nearing the end of the pilgrim journey, and the dear man said to Mr. Gosden, "He has confirmed that this provision is made. He has not told me 'it is not so'!" My dear friend, my Jesus and yours never fails in all the words He has uttered in blessing His people. Solemn to those outside Christ, those with a counterfeit religion, those numbered like that fig tree to which the dear Saviour came as if expecting to find figs, that is to find fruit, but there was nothing but leaves. I understand the figs would appear before the leaves, the first figs, so if there were leaves one would anticipate finding fruit. May God preserve us from a fig-leaf religion. May the fruit of the Spirit be seen in us, yea, as a branch in the vine, abiding in Him, deriving all sap from Him, "the feeblest branch of Thine."

He says, "I would have told you. I go." What words they are! What do you see? My friends you must bear with the simple testimony this afternoon. I see first the Saviour, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, descend from heaven, born of a virgin, coming to this earth, laying aside His glory (not His deity, ever blessed be His name!), the Son of God, but now the God-Man. Revealed to those dear shepherds, when the angel from heaven said, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto *you*" – is it you? – "unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." The Babe in the manger. "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest" – God. We can hardly comprehend it: a Babe, "God was manifest in the flesh." To come for His people loved with an everlasting love. Given by the Father to His own dear Son. And He received them and has come for them. We trace His life. The gospel from His lips. The example. We feel to fail so much. Is there in us that which speaks of Jesus? The warnings. Yet the going forth – Gethsemane. The garden. It was in this garden where sin first entered. In this garden, the dear Saviour, the sinless One, bowed to the earth. "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." The cup of wrath. He knew all that was before Him. "I go." "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

“Here’s my claim, and here alone;
None a Saviour more can need;
Deeds of righteousness I’ve none;
No, not one good work to plead” – *not one* – all sprayed

with sin – not one.

“Not a glimpse of hope for me,
Only in Gethsemane.”

“I go.” He went forth from Gethsemane. He goes forth into Gabbatha. O the spitting, the mockery, the religious leaders, the Roman soldiers! Yes friends, it is easy to look at it with sympathy, and rightly so, but has the Lord brought you by the Spirit to this: “Sinner it was you; you have done that; it was your sin”? I believe I know a little of it. It brings one to repentance and love and faith. On to Calvary’s cross, and there at the cross, there was a trophy of His grace. But then comes the darkest of all: the three hours, the hiding of the Father’s face. He who said, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Beloved! He said, “I go.” He bore it. “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Yet to His people He says – His people, they are sinners – He says, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” Forsaken, but triumphantly He cries, “It is finished.” Sealed by His glorious resurrection entrance into glory.

He says, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again.” A place prepared. I believe one of our brethren in prayer this morning named the word on my mind as a contrast. It is in the words of the dear Saviour when He shall say, when that final division is made, to those on the right hand: “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” But to those on the left hand: “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire” – and this is the solemn word – “*prepared* for the devil and his angels.” Beloved hearer, what has God prepared for you? It is one or the other. I am not speaking legally. I am speaking in love for souls, in concern, because, my friends, the days are short. “Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”

“I go to prepare a place for you.” The dear Saviour died for us poor sinners, dear Paul, and you and I, by the grace of God, born-again sinners. Yes! If God has called you by grace, it is inseparable from the blood of Christ. And when the Lord makes it known, seals it, strengthens faith to believe it, we can say with the dear Apostle Paul, “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.”

He said, “I will come again, and receive you unto Myself.” Beloved, He says, “I will come again.” I am reminded of this word in the Hebrews where the dear apostle writing to those believers then, says, “As

it is appointed.” We miss some of our appointments through carelessness, through inability, or we turn them away, or cancel them. *This one will be kept.* “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” I bless God for the next two words: “So Christ.” Two precious words of hope – “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto *them* that look *for* Him” – are you looking for Him? Anticipating the day! He is coming again. If you are looking for Him, then you have looked *to* Him. You may say you cannot say you are looking for Him, but can you say you are looking *to* Him? Are you one of those poor sinners fleeing from the wrath to come, to a precious Christ on the cross at Calvary, to that blood? Is it your only plea, is it your only hope for heaven? My friend, there is none other, none other. O what a mercy this is!

He says, “I will come again, and receive you unto Myself.” And this is the Saviour that received sinners on earth. This is the Saviour that says, Yes, those poor sinners, I loved them, I died for them, I gave Myself for them. “Because I live, ye shall live also.” Yes, you will come and be with Me in glory. “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory.” O, my dear old pastor used to say, “The best is yet to be.”

There are two little sentences in the Epistle to the Thessalonians: “Together with Him.” The Saviour who died on Calvary’s cross, and rose again, is now in heaven, interceding for His people, waiting to come in all His glory and majesty. All power is His. But also we read, “Together with them.” Meet the Lord in the clouds, to be together with Him, together with them. And, my beloved friends, it means so much to my poor soul to say this: Lord Jesus, Thou knowest that those in hell, that’s where I deserve to be, but they would not be my friends. My friends are those that I read of in the Bible. I have got many friends in the Bible. (I don’t say that irreverently, I love them.) And as I look upon this assembly here this afternoon, I don’t say this sentimentally, but you are my brethren and sisters in Christ, I hope you are, but I know many of you are; if not, I pray all of you are. And my heart goes out in love, and I think of those that I have loved now in heaven, and we shall all be together in glory. O He says here, “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself.” “To be with Christ,” says one, “which is far better.”

Now, I do hope the Lord will help me. I want to speak in closing, words of heaven itself. Who can speak of it? “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them” – one Scripture says, “that wait for Him,” the other Scripture says, “that love Him.” One thinks of themselves on earth as sinners, black, filthy, vile, stained. “Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee.” Presented faultless before the throne with exceeding

joy. It must be. The only entrance to glory is for a pardoned sinner, washed in the blood of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

On earth, darkness. The powers of darkness, the path of darkness. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." "Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." And they shall see His face. There will be no night in heaven.

On earth sorrow, tears. Some of us do not weep easily; others weep profusely. There are inward tears; tears give relief. But my friends, I have often looked at that word: "And God shall wipe away," God will do it, "all tears from their eyes." There will not be another tear, will there? O what a blessed prospect that is! And with this I think of that word, "groanings." My friends, if you are a child of God doing battle with the devil and your own sinful self, you will know what it is to groan. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." That word in the Psalms, "Lord, all my desire is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee." They come before Him. We read about groanings in Romans chapter 8. These are the people to whom there is no condemnation, and no separation from the love of Christ. Yes, there were groanings but, my friends, there is life and the Lord brings them through. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Where is your harp? On the willows? In a sad place are you, poor sinner? Think you will never sing His praise again? I know what I am talking about! But like one dear friend once said, they never took their harps down and threw them away; they waited. There will come the time. "Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." And O my friends, we read in the Revelation the sound of the harpers harping with their harps. O what a sweet melody it will be in the glory land at last! Songs of praise unending. I speak of warfare and temptation. My friend, there will be a laying down of the armour, there will be final rest. The devil knocks us down sometimes. "Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last." At the last. Devil, you won't have us! You won't! "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

What about this body of sin? "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." Like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

I must come to a close in a moment or two. I now hesitate. There were two occasions in my life when the Lord so blessed me in a

particular way. The first: in the night awaiting a heart operation. About four o'clock in the morning I felt quiet, calm. I felt, O it will be lovely if my Jesus comes, my Jesus. He came, and it was a word that I was not all that familiar with. I mean, for example such a word as, "Underneath are the everlasting arms"; you will never wear that out. But it was this: "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me." Lord, that can't be me! But, my friends, for I don't know how long, twenty minutes, half an hour, I was favoured with such meditation. It just poured in. I could see such beauty in it. I could see His arms around me. I could see Him carry me. I could see Him with all my burdens, all my sorrows, all my trials, all my difficulties, all my sins. "His left hand is under my head." "Even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." And then, "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me." I saw the father embracing the son that has come back from a far country.

O my friends, I could go on, I wish I could go on like I did then, but it was so sacred, I was going to say it poured in. Now, not long ago, I woke in the night. I don't think it was a dream; it certainly wasn't a vision. But, I think I was thinking about heaven. And as I thought about heaven I traced out a little of what I have tried to say here in these closing thoughts. As soon as I thought of something on earth, something poured into my soul of what it shall be in heaven. It was a sacred time, my friends. I can't describe it. The cup ran over. Now I know the devil is going to get hold of me. He said, "Ah, you wait, it will all come to nothing." My friends, my hope is as my dear friend said this morning, that hope is the anchor of the soul. There is another word there, "So He bringeth them." Yes, your poor little bark tossed about and yet you know the Lord has come and said, "Peace be still," hasn't He? Sometimes it has been terrible waves, sometimes it has been that dreadful calm and sometimes it has been a favourable breeze carrying you on. "So He bringeth them unto their desired haven," the place of eternal rest.

Well, I must close. It can't be long, can it? O that "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." My dear young people, God bless you, help you, give you success in all your studies, but there is no one compared to Jesus Christ. One young girl at Tamworth Road, as she has grown up, often says, "The best friend is Jesus." And it is so. May you know Jesus as your friend.

Well, what can we say?

"If such the sweetness of the streams,
What must the fountain be?
Where saints and angels draw their bliss
Immediately from Thee!"

“O Christ, He is the Fountain,
 The deep sweet well of love!
 The streams on earth I’ve tasted,
 More deep I’ll drink above:
 There to an ocean fullness,
 His mercy doth expand,
 And glory, glory dwelleth
 In Immanuel’s land.”

“Come, let us join our cheerful songs
 With angels round the throne;
 Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
 But all their joys are one.

“‘Worthy the Lamb that died,’ they cry,
 ‘To be exalted thus.’
 ‘Worthy the Lamb,’ our lips reply,
 ‘For He was slain for us.’”

I had a dear friend at Tamworth Road, a dear godly member of the church, dying of cancer some years ago. And she said that these words were so sweet to her (I close with them): “If I live, Jesus will be with me; if I die, I will be with Jesus.” Amen.

CHAIRMAN: Thank you dear Mr. Wood for that address. Dear friends, these are the things that unite us. May we ever keep them in view, then we will be of one heart and one mind in the Lord.

Hymn 500 was sung to close the Meeting.

GRACIOUS DRAWINGS

By Dr. Robert Hawker (1753-1827)

“Draw me, we will run after Thee” (Song 1. 4).

The church is still going on with her discourse in this verse, and her address is still to Him whose name is as ointment poured forth. The verse opens with a petition to the Lord: “Draw me,” as if conscious that without this precious act of sovereign grace, and which is literally the case, the church could not come to Jesus. It is a promise of Jehovah, arising from His everlasting love, to draw His people. “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer. 31. 3). And our Lord Jesus hath laid so much stress upon those drawings of the Father that He expressly saith, “No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him” (John 6. 44); and

again repeated it to show its importance (verse 65). But as if to show at once that oneness in the Godhead which Jesus hath with the Father, and to encourage the poor sinner who, like the church here, desires to be drawn to Christ, Jesus Himself sweetly promised in His gospel that when He was lifted up upon His cross, all His redeemed ones He would draw to Himself (cf. John 12. 32).

Reader! do you know what those gracious drawings mean in your own experience? Have you felt your heart constrained to come to Jesus Christ for life and for salvation, convinced by the Holy Ghost that you need His salvation, and that without it you are lost for ever? If so, you will be able to describe, better than any form of words I can make use of, what that sovereign and effectual grace is which totally differs from all moral persuasion, and which sweetly constrains the soul to fly out of itself into the arms of Jesus for pardon, mercy and peace in the blood of His cross. You will then be able to tell me how the Lord wrought upon your heart, how divinely He taught you the evil of sin and loveliness of Jesus, and led out your whole soul upon His Person and righteousness. And since the first drawings of His love, how He now at times inclines your whole soul to desire nearer communion with Him and more frequent manifestations of Himself; and to keep you from ever more being drawn away by the world, by the suggestions of Satan, or the indwelling corruption in your own heart, from Jesus the sole Object of your love. See David's desire to this effect (Psa. 27. 4).

But we should observe on this verse, that while the church prays to be drawn to Jesus, she promiseth for herself and companions (perhaps the virgins before spoken of) that they will run after Him. "Draw *me*, we will run after Thee." When she says, "Draw me, we will run after Thee," the church did not mean to say that the drawing of her would incline all to run, unless indeed we consider the church in this place as the collected body of believers, and then the doctrine is sweet and consolatory. For the church as one made up of the whole body, of which Jesus is the Head, is His fulness (Eph. 1. 23). But without reading the passage in this sense, it will follow that the drawings of the Lord are necessary for every individual member of His mystical body. There is a great beauty in the expression running after Christ. Not simply running to Him once for protection, but always pursuing Him: following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth (Rev. 14. 4); cleaving to Him, as Moses expresseth it (Deut. 10. 20); or as Isaiah has it, hanging upon Him all the glory of His Father's house (Isa. 22. 24). It is in this sense David meant it, no doubt, when he said, "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart" (Psa. 119. 32).

PAUL AND JAMES

FAITH AND WORKS

By William Pemble (1591-1623), a Puritan minister who died young.

We are to give you warning of that stumbling stone which James (as it may seem) has laid in our way, lest any should dash his faith upon it and fall, as our adversaries have done, into that error of justification by works. That blessed apostle, in the second chapter of his Epistle, seems not only to give occasion to, but directly to teach this doctrine of justification by works. For in verse 21 and following, he expressly says that Abraham was justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar, and also that Rahab was in like manner justified by works when she entertained the spies. Whence also he sets down a general conclusion that man is justified by works and not by faith alone (James 2. 24).

Now at first glance, nothing can be spoken more contrary to Paul's doctrine in Romans and elsewhere. For speaking of the same example of Abraham, he says (exactly to the contrary) that Abraham was not justified by works, for then he might have boasted (Rom. 4. 2). And treating generally of man's justification by faith, after a strong dispute he draws forth the conclusion that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law (Rom. 3. 28). This conclusion appears contradictory to that of James. This harsh discord between these apostles appears to some as impossible to resolve by any qualification. Knowing that the Holy Ghost never forgets Himself, some have concluded that if the Spirit of truth spoke by Paul, it was doubtless the spirit of error that spoke by the author of this Epistle of James.

But this medicine is worse than the disease and is rather violence than skill thus to cut the knot where it cannot be readily untied. A safer and milder course may be held, and some means found out for the resolving of this grand difference, without robbing the church of so much precious treasure of divine knowledge as is stored up in this Epistle. Wherefore both they of the Romish and we of the Reformed churches, admitting this Epistle as canonical [of or appearing in the Biblical canon, i.e., the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament or the twenty-seven books of the New Testament], do each search after a fit reconciliation between the apostles. But they and we are irreconcilable in our various reconciliations of them.

There are two ways whereby we reconcile this seeming difference.

The *first* way is by distinguishing the word *justification*, which may be taken either for the absolution of a sinner in God's judgment or for the declaration of a man's righteousness before men. This distinction is certain and has its ground in Scripture, which uses the word *justify* in

both ways, for the acquitting of us in God's sight and for the manifestation of our innocence before man against accusation or suspicion of fault. We apply this distinction to reconcile the two apostles thus: Paul speaks of justification in the forum of *God*; James speaks of justification in the forum of *man*. A man is justified by faith without works, says Paul; that is, in *God's* sight a man obtains remission of sins and is reputed to be just only for his faith in Christ, not for his works' sake. A man is justified by works and not by faith only, says James; that is, in *man's* sight we are declared to be just by our good works and not by our faith only, which with other inward and invisible graces is made visible unto man only in the good works which they see us perform. That this application is not unfit to reconcile this difference may be shown by the following analysis.

First, as for Paul, it is agreed on all sides that he speaks of man's justification in God's sight (Rom. 3. 20).

Second, as for James, we are to show that with just probability he may be understood as referring to the declaration of our justification and righteousness before men. For proof thereof, the text affords us these reasons.

"Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (James 2. 18). Here the true Christian, speaking to the hypocritical boaster of his faith, requires of him a declaration of his faith and justification thereby by a real proof, not a verbal profession, promising for his part to manifest and prove the truth of his own faith by his good works. Whence it appears that, before man, none can justify the soundness of his faith but by his works thence proceeding.

Abraham is said to be justified "when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar" (James 2. 21). Now it is manifest that Abraham was justified in God's sight long before, even twenty-five years earlier (Gen. 15. 6). Therefore, by that admirable work of his in offering his son he was declared before all the world to be a just man and a true believer. And for this purpose God tempted Abraham in that trial of his faith, that thereby all believers might behold a rare pattern of a lively and justifying faith and see that Abraham was not without good cause called "the father of the faithful."

It is said that Abraham's faith "wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect" (James 2. 22). Even in the judgment of popish expositors, such as the Jesuit commentator Lorinus, this is to be understood of the manifestation of Abraham's faith by his works. His faith directed his works; his works manifested the power and perfection of his faith.

It is not, then, without good probability of reason that Calvin and other expositors on our side have given this solution to the problem.

This now is the first way of reconciling these two passages. Nevertheless, although this approach may be defended against anything that our adversaries object to the contrary, yet many very learned divines choose rather to tread in another path and more nearly to press the apostles' steps, whom also in this point I willingly follow.

The second way, then, of reconciling these passages is by distinguishing the word "faith," which is taken in a double sense. It is first taken for that faith which is true and living (faith which works through love) and is fruitful in all manner of obedience. Second, it is taken for that faith which is false and dead, being only a bare acknowledgment of the truth of all articles of religion accompanied with an outward formality of profession, but yet destitute of sincere obedience.

This distinction of this word "faith" is certain by the Scriptures. We now apply it thus: when Paul affirms that we are justified by faith only, he speaks of that faith which is true and living, working by charity. When James denies that a man is justified by faith only, he disputes against that faith which is false and dead, without power to bring forth any good works. So that the apostles speak no contradiction because Paul teaches that we are justified by a *true* faith and James affirms that we are not justified by a *false* faith.

Again, Paul says we are not justified by works; James says we are justified by works. Neither is there any contradiction at all here. For James understands by "works" a working faith, in opposition to the idle and dead faith before spoken of. Whence it is plain that these two propositions, that we are not justified by works (which is Paul's) and that we are justified by a working faith (which is James's) sweetly consort together. Paul severs works from our justification, but not from our faith. James joins works to our faith, but not to our justification.

In like manner, these two propositions – that we are justified by a working faith and that we are justified by works – differ greatly. The first is true and shows us what qualities are necessarily required unto the existence of that faith, whereby the just shall live, namely that beside the power of believing in the promise there is also a habitual proneness and resolution unto the doing of all good works joined with it. But the latter proposition is false. For although true faith is equally as apt to work in bringing forth universal obedience to God's will as it is apt to believe and trust perfectly in God's promises, yet nevertheless we are not justified by it as it brings forth good works, but as it embraces the promises of the gospel.

Now then, James affirms that which is true, that we are justified by a working faith; and Paul denies that which is false, that we are justified by works.

1555: THE YEAR OF MARTYRDOMS (2)

The Word of their Testimony

As the year moved to its close, more and yet more showed their willingness to die for the faith. No arguments could prevail against them though every effort was made to win “heretics” back to the Roman church. Their testimony was clear in its appeal to Scripture alone. They were of one mind in their abhorrence of the Mass. With great clearness, they saw the issue for which they stood.

Typical of the many professions of faith is the testimony of John Denley of Maidstone, burned at Uxbridge on August 8th. The charges against him were based on his confession of faith, which he carried in writing: “As concerning the sacrament of the body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ, my belief is this – that the bread and wine is appointed unto a sacrament; and that after thanks given to God the Father, then it doth represent unto me the very body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ; not that the bread *is* the body, or the wine the blood, but that I in faith do see that blessed body of our Saviour broken on the cross, and His precious blood plenteously shed for the redemption of my sins. Also in faith I hear Him call us unto Him, saying, ‘Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ In faith I come unto Him and I am refreshed, so that I believe that all that do come unto the table of the Lord in this faith, fear and love, being sorry for their offences, intending earnestly to lead a godly life in this vale of misery, do receive the fruit of the death of Christ, which fruit is our salvation.”

Heirs together of Suffering and Glory

Not only men but women also remained steadfast unto death. Among the London martyrs are numbered John Warne, a twenty-nine years old upholsterer, and his wife Elizabeth, who were burned within three months of each other. John Warne was taken for denying the doctrine of the Mass and refusing to attend. He freely confessed that every charge against him was true and refused to recant despite the bishop’s promises and threatenings. The day before his death, he wrote his confession of faith, which may be read in Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*. This is in the form of a commentary on the Apostles’ Creed. This young workman’s clear grasp of the truth and the masterly way in which he expresses himself on the deepest points of theology reveal the deep teaching he had received of the Holy Spirit. He ends: “This I do believe; and I am content by God’s grace to confirm and seal the truth of the same with my blood.” On May 31st, he was burned at Smithfield along with

John Cardmaker, who had once been a friar. Having prayed, they shook hands, and bravely endured their cruel end.

His wife, Elizabeth, had also been taken prisoner. She was charged on the same grounds as her husband. One of the foremost to seek her death was one of her own relatives, a Dr. Story. When she was brought several times before Bonner, Bishop of London, she cried: "Do what ye will; for if Christ were in an error, then am I in an error." She was condemned as an heretic, and in the month of August her body was burned at Stratford Bar, her redeemed spirit joining that of her husband "with Christ; which is far better."

The Essex Courtier's Triumphant End

One of the most amazing martyrdoms was that of Thomas Haukes. He was a man of good upbringing and education and was by profession a courtier. He is described as a very tall, handsome man, noted for his gentleness and Christian character. He was in the service of the Earl of Oxford but left during the changes at the beginning of Mary's reign. His enemies reported him to the Bishop of London because the baptism of his child had been delayed, and he was charged with despising the sacraments. Haukes denied that an unbaptized child must be damned. He proceeded to call the Mass "detestable, abominable and profitable for nothing," and the confessional "a blasphemy against God." The books he loved – those of Latimer, Cranmer, Bradford and Ridley – were condemned as heresies. His forthright confession caused great hatred. He stood on Scripture alone – "if any man preach any other gospel, let him be accursed." According to the usual custom, he was exhorted to recant, but replied, "If I had an hundred bodies, I would suffer them all to be torn in pieces rather than I would abjure or recant." Whereupon he was condemned and sent to prison.

His friends arranged with him that if his pain in the flames could be borne, he should lift up his hands before he died. At Coggeshall, where he died on June 10th, he spoke to the people at the stake and then poured out his soul in prayer. After a long time in the flames, it was thought that his wasted body was dead, when suddenly in great rejoicing, he stretched his hands above his head and three times clapped them together. Straightway he fell dead into the flames. Great rejoicing followed among the crowd as they beheld the blessed end of this martyr of God even in such great suffering.

John Bradford and the Candlemaker's Boy

On July 1st at Smithfield, one of the youngest martyrs died at the same stake as one of the greatest champions of the Reformation. John Bradford was born at Manchester and educated at the Temple in London,

and at Cambridge. He showed himself a brilliant scholar and was appointed a Fellow of Pembroke Hall. There the famous reformer, Martin Bucer, perceiving that God had called him to the ministry, encouraged him to preach. For three years, during King Edward's reign, he laboured faithfully in many parts of the land, and his work was singularly blessed. Foxe says of him, "He sharply opened and reproved sin; he sweetly preached Christ crucified, pithily impugned heresies and errors, and earnestly persuaded the people to live godly lives." Even more than his learning and his ability, his lovely Christian character won him respect and he was dearly loved throughout the land. He only slept four hours and spent the rest of his time in study, preaching, visiting, giving, or other good works. His great rejoicing was in salvation entirely of grace; he is reported to have said when seeing a criminal condemned, "There but for the grace of God goes John Bradford." On Mary's accession, to widespread distress he was imprisoned, and death at the stake was made inevitable.

John Leaf, who suffered with him, was a candlemaker's boy, less than twenty years old. He was arrested because he believed the Mass was idolatrous, and said he would die for his belief. He was so surely persuaded of the truth that nothing could move him. When a bill of recantation was sent to him in prison, he pricked his finger and sprinkled the bill with blood, saying he would seal his testimony with his blood rather than recant.

On July 1st, a solemn scene was witnessed at Smithfield. The venerable reformer, tall and slender, with auburn beard, lay prostrate one side of the stake; the young apprentice lay the other, each in prayer to his Lord for an hour. Then the sheriff cried, "Arise, and make an end." Bradford gave his raiment to his servant, and then said aloud, "O England, England, repent thee of thy sins. Beware of idolatry; beware of false antichrists; take heed they do not deceive you!" Then to the boy who stood by him, he said, "Be of good comfort, brother; for we shall have a happy supper with the Lord this night." Thus, fearlessly, the two martyrs of God stood together in the fire till their sufferings ended and they entered into the glory of Emmanuel's land.

"I ask them whence their victory came,
They with united breath,
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
Their triumph to His death.

"They marked the footsteps that He trod,
(His zeal inspired their breast);
And following their incarnate God,
Possess the promised rest."

THROUGH MANY DANGERS

*The autobiography of Isaac Lewis (1823-1896), for over twenty years
pastor at Staplehurst, Kent
(Continued from page 159)*

I must now speak of my joining the church. After the dear Lord had set my soul at liberty, I felt a loving desire to walk in the commands of my precious Christ in the ordinances of His house, and I asked the Lord to make it plain, when He sealed these words upon my heart: "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart"; "For as often as ye do this, ye shew forth your Lord's death till He come." I then felt able to speak to the aged minister. I was proposed to the church, and at the time appointed went before them, gave in my experience, and was unanimously received by the minister and people, who all gave me the right hand of fellowship. This minister held with open communion. I was convinced of sin under him, and loved him for the truth's sake. I asked him to baptize me, but he said he was too old; so that it was some time before I was baptized. I am a Strict Baptist, and hope the Lord will keep me faithful respecting church government till I die; for I have never received it of man.

I now desire to speak of the manifold mercies of my covenant God in providence and grace. I must mention that my wife was taken very ill; and as nothing did her good, I thought her native air might be beneficial to her. It was decided for her to go alone, and that I should follow, which I did in due time; and through the good hand of my God upon me, I arrived in safety, the distance being 140 miles.

We remained some time, staying with relations, whose ways were not in accordance with my convictions of what is right. On our way home my wife said, "I fear we shall find something wrong." These words were the means of rousing me from my stupor. I was brought to examine myself, when I found things were far from being right between God and my soul. I had been sowing to the flesh, and the fruit that the flesh brought forth was corruption. There had been no heart-breathings, no soul communion, no free access at a throne of grace in prayer. When the Lord the Spirit shone into my poor, benighted soul the only prayer I could find was, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." The fruit of the flesh was made an offence to me, and then I said, "No more visiting ungodly relations"; and I do hope the dear Lord will ever keep me from it.

As we were getting near home, we were met by a friend who asked whether we had heard that my old boat was sunk, and it was not likely she could ever be repaired. This was like a thunderbolt bursting upon me; for here was all my support. I could not see how I was to get my living. At the top of all this, I had spent my money foolishly. I had but

a few shillings left, and soon a quarter's rent would be due – no employment, no money. The enemy said to me, "There is no help in God for you." I sank in deep waters, and was afraid the water-floods would overflow me. The boat was indeed lost, and my faith seemed to be lost too.

The next morning I was sitting on a log of wood by the river side, when such a weakness and trembling came over me that I nearly fainted. The trouble I was in, and my sins, were more than I knew how to bear; but God, who is rich in mercy, for that great love wherewith He loved us even when dead in sins, quickened my soul afresh, and put a cry in my heart. And this was the cry: "Lord, undertake for me; for I am oppressed!" The dear Lord did undertake for me, both temporally and spiritually. My brother said something must be done. I said, "Do what you like." He said, "Let us go to the shipwright and see if anything can be done." We went, and he told us the boat could be got up and repaired for £50 or £60 and that if we could get a friend to pay half the money down, the other might be left, as we could work it out.

I felt that the gold and silver and the hearts of all men were in the Lord's hands, and that He could dispose the heart of our employer to do all we needed; and, all glory to His sacred name, He did so. The work was completed. My brother had to help the shipwright. I earned fourteen shillings a week, half of which I agreed to give my brother, although I had only seven shillings a week to live upon. I think I never worked more cheerfully, for I felt assured my God was managing for me. The boat was finished and was better than she had ever been. I truly found this was amongst the all things that worked for my good and God's glory. In the course of time, by industry and economy, I was enabled to pay all my debts. My brother was partner with me in the boat.

The next thing I must speak of is my deliverance from a watery grave by the mighty power of God. In the month of January 1866, on a Saturday morning while we were out fishing, there had been a heavy fall of snow in the night and it was freezing, with a strong east wind and a heavy sea running. As my brother was putting the vessel on the other tack, I said, "I must pull off this heavy jacket"; which I did, and then I went forward to handle the sails; and while in the act of forcing the fore sail to leeward, the strop of the foresheet broke, struck me, and threw me violently overboard, head first. The vessel overwhelmed me; I was under the vessel; and then came the enemy with these words, "What is your hope based upon for eternity? You will never again see the light of day."

A strange sensation came over me, which I can never describe. The only thing I can compare it to is a man being taken from a hot bath and placed in a case of cold iron, made to fit close to his skin; no one can imagine what my feelings were. The thoughts of eternity were heavy

upon me, and the devil pressed me sore with, "Where is your hope? It is all over with you now," when these words burst forth from my heart: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," and this was more than a match for the devil. These blessed words were applied by the Holy Ghost, and by precious faith I was enabled to lift up this blood-stained banner in the face of my enemy. The power of the eternal Spirit sweetly blew it out, so that I saw no more of my enemy, and heard no more of his roaring at this time. My God gave me to see Satan was still a liar, as he had been from the beginning. I am a living witness that the devil fled from me.

The dear apostle admonishes the church of God to be sober, to be vigilant: for, he says, "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." What a mercy for the living church of God that although Satan is our enemy, he is God's servant, as manifested in the case of Job, and again in Peter! O how we see the devil crouch down under the sovereignty of the Son of God! Christ said to Peter, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." There is no wonder that hypocrites in Zion desire the same as their father, the devil, who, I believe, did not desire to have Peter's life: it was only to sift him as wheat. He knew what pure grains of gospel gold were in Peter's heart, and all his sifting would never get them out. I believe that Satan was present at the confession of Peter's faith when he said to Christ, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and when Jesus said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." What a blessed foundation the church has, and what a wise Master Builder is here declared – God to be her builder! Blessed be His holy name! It was He who was with the church in the wilderness, with our fathers who received the lively oracles to give unto us. "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars." What a mercy, "it is not of works," that proceed from the creature, "lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." This is the new and living way that must bring all glory to the everlasting Three-in-One; which is better than all the noise of free-will. Go where you will, you can hear the sound of the hammer of free-will smiting upon the creature's good works.

You must pardon me for digressing. I am not the manufacturer of my thoughts; as they come in, so they must come out.

As soon as those words were applied with power to my mind my soul was delivered from the enemy, and my body from a watery grave. I began to rise to the surface of the water, when I saw something look black, which I knew was the little boat; it was some distance from the

larger one. "Well," I thought, "if I do not grasp that boat before she goes by, I shall never struggle again in this world." But that God who holds the wind in His fist and the waters in the hollow of His hand, held and guided His poor, unworthy worm. I shall use my brother's own words. He told me I rose out of the water like a man who had his foot upon something solid, and who gave a spring to reach his object. I know that my feet were upon the Rock of eternal Ages, and that He had eternally established my goings. One of my goings had been down into the watery deep, that His power in bringing me up again might be known; and I am sure all my springs were and are in Him, temporally and spiritually. I did but just grasp the boat at the hinder part, and there I hung till my shipmate came to help me in.

I do not know how long I was under the vessel. When I got on deck, I had to pant very hard for breath. I had no dry clothes to put on till someone in a vessel close by lent me some. I went down into their cabin, in which there was a fire. I had no earthly company; but truly I was enabled to pour out my soul before the Lord in praise and thanksgiving for His marvellous interposition in delivering my body from a watery grave, and my soul from the power of the devil. To the surprise of everyone, I did not take cold.

When I reached home, I had such holy boldness at a throne of grace, and such blessed union of soul with the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, that I felt if my dear Lord had covered my poor body in the watery grave and taken my soul to Himself, I should then have been praising Him with all the blood-washed and blood-bought family of heaven. Truly my soul did sit with Christ in heavenly places. It was a time of love to me. My conversation was in heaven, the earth was beneath my feet, the devil was not allowed to molest me, and the corruptions of the flesh were not permitted to show their hateful head nor disturb my peace. Jesus says, "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." The world, or men of the world give false peace in reference to eternal things. The world, or would-be ministers of Christ, can go to a poor, dying sinner in the agonies of death, preach a false Christ, send them out of the world with a lie in their right hand, and so fancy they can procure the peace of God for them; but their agreement with death and hell shall not stand. The poor, deluded souls think hell shall not overtake them. The man of God compares this kind of religion to a dream: "As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when Thou awakest, Thou shalt despise their image." O how true it is that the deceived and the deceiver are in the Lord's hands. He says when they cry peace and safety, then sudden destruction shall come upon them. Not so with the Lord's living family; the Apostle Paul, when writing to the Ephesians (2. 14, 15), shows how the church of God comes into possession of true peace: "For He is our

peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one man, so making peace.”

My soul was favoured with this peace at that time. This is peace that passeth all understanding; that is, natural understanding: “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

(To be continued)

BOOK REVIEWS

A Short History of Fenstanton Particular Baptists, by Bryan E. Izzard; 32 page booklet; free on request (we suggest postage is sent) from Mr. Izzard, 4 Westbrook Close, Hilton, Huntingdon, Cambs., PE28 9PE.

We are really pleased to welcome another chapel history.

Well written by the pastor, and beautifully illustrated and compiled, this little book is generously being given away free.

John E. Marshall: Life and Writings, compiled by John J. Murray; hardback; 320 pages; price £14.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

We never knew John Marshall but all we ever heard of him was good.

The first 86 pages of the book consist of a short biography written by John J. Murray. Mr. Marshall, who died in 2003, was minister for forty-five years in Hemel Hempstead, where he maintained a faithful witness to the truth.

Most of the book consists of eight conference addresses on eight very varying subjects. “The Christian and Mental Illness” reveals a pastor’s sympathetic concern for those who suffer. “John Rogers: Proto-Martyr of the English Reformation” and “The Puritan Woman” are interesting and well-researched historical articles. “‘Rabbi’ Duncan and the Problem of Assurance” is a valuable consideration of what true assurance is, with reference to the eminent Dr. Duncan, who was so assailed by doubt. “Thomas Scott and *The Force of Truth*” and “Walter Marshall and Sanctification” deal with two famous books; the latter is perhaps more for ministers and students. The two biblical addresses are excellent: “The Prophet Balaam” and “Slaying Giants: 1 Samuel 17. 42-47.” Mr. Marshall keeps faithfully to the Authorised Version.

We enjoyed reading this book and found it very profitable.

GOSPEL STANDARD SOCIETIES ANNUAL MEETINGS: 2006

The Annual Meetings of the Gospel Standard Societies will be held next year, if the Lord will, on Friday, April 21st.

THE FRIEND OF SINNERS

One there is, above all others,
 Well deserves the name of Friend;
 His is love beyond a brother's,
 Costly, free, and knows no end:
 They who once His kindness prove
 Find it everlasting love.

Which of all our friends, to save us,
 Could or would have shed his blood?
 But our Jesus died to have us
 Reconciled in Him to God.
 This was boundless love indeed!
 Jesus is a Friend in need.

Men, when raised to lofty stations,
 Often know their friends no more;
 Slight and scorn their poor relations,
 Though they valued them before:
 But our Saviour always owns
 Those whom He redeemed with groans.

When He lived on earth abased,
 Friend of sinners was His name;
 Now, above all glory raised,
 He rejoices in the same:
 Still He calls them brethren, friends,
 And to all their wants attends.

Could we bear from one another
 What He daily bears from us?
 Yet this glorious Friend and Brother
 Loves us though we treat Him thus:
 Though for good we render ill,
 He accounts us brethren still.

O for grace our hearts to soften!
 Teach us, Lord, at length to love;
 We, alas! forget too often
 What a Friend we have above.
 But when home our souls are brought,
 We will love Thee as we ought.

John Newton (1725-1807)

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
JULY 2005

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

THE SMALL SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY

*Sermon preached by John Newton at Olney Parish Church,
Buckinghamshire, c. 1766*

Text: “At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Mat. 11. 25).

Our blessed Lord perfectly knew beforehand the persons who would profit by His ministry; but His observations, conduct and discourses were intended as a pattern and instruction to His followers. He is said to have marvelled at the unbelief of some and at the fate of others; not as though either was strange to Him who was acquainted with all hearts, and always knew what He Himself would do; but it is spoken of Him as a man, and to show how His ministers and people should be affected upon the like occasions.

In the preceding verses He had been speaking of Capernaum and other places where His mighty works had been performed in vain. He had denounced a sentence against them and foretold that their punishment would be heavier in proportion to the greatness of the privileges they had abused. But this was not His pleasing work. Mercy and grace were His delight, and He usually expressed sorrow and pain for the obstinacy of sinners. He wept for His avowed enemies, and prayed for the murderers who nailed Him to the cross. It was not without grief that He declared the approaching doom of these cities; yet, raising His thoughts from earth to heaven, He acquiesced in the will of His heavenly Father, and expressed the highest satisfaction in His appointment. He knew that, however some would harden themselves, there was a remnant who would receive the truth, and that the riches and glory of the divine sovereignty and grace would be magnified. Before I enter upon the particulars, this connexion of the words will afford us ground for some observations.

I. That the small success and efficacy of the preached gospel upon multitudes who hear it is a subject of wonder and grief to the ministers and people of God. It was so to our Lord Jesus, considered as a Preacher and Messenger; and they, so far as they have received His Spirit, judge and act as He did.

1. Those who have indeed tasted that the Lord is gracious have had such a powerful experience in their own souls of the necessity and value of the gospel, that in their first warmth, and till painful experience has convinced them of the contrary, they can hardly think it possible that sinners should stand out against its evidence. They are ready to say, "Surely it is because they are ignorant: they have not had opportunity of considering the evil of sin, the curse of the law and the immense goodness of God manifested in His Son; but when these things shall be plainly and faithfully set before them, surely they will submit and thankfully receive the glad tidings."

With such sanguine hopes Melancthon entered the ministry at the dawn of the Reformation. He thought he had only to speak and to be heard in order to convince; but he soon found himself mistaken, and that the love of sin, the power of prejudice and the devices of Satan were such obstacles in his way, as nothing less than the mighty operations of the Spirit of God could break through. And all who preach upon his principles and with his views have known something of his disappointment. Speaking from the feelings of a full heart, they are ready to expect that others should be no less affected than themselves. But when they find that they are heard with indifference, perhaps with contempt; that those whose salvation they long for are enraged against them for their labour of love; that they cannot prevail upon their dearest friends and nearest relatives; this grieves and wounds them to the heart.

2. They have been convinced themselves that unbelief was the worst of all their sins; and therefore, though they pity all who live in the practice of sin, yet they have a double grief to see them reject the only means of salvation, and that this contempt will lie more heavily upon them than anything they can be charged with besides. It gladdens the heart of a minister to see a large and attentive assembly; but how is this joy damped by a just fear lest any, lest many of them should receive this grace of God in vain (2 Cor. 6. 1), and have cause at last to bewail the day when the name of Jesus was first sounded in their ears.

It seems plain, then, that those who are indifferent about the event of the gospel – who satisfy themselves with this thought, that the elect shall be saved, and feel no concern for unawakened sinners – make a wrong inference from a true doctrine, and know not what spirit they are of. Jesus wept for those who perished in their sins. Paul had great grief and sorrow of heart for the Jews, though he gives them this character: "They please not God, and are contrary to all men." It well becomes us, while we admire distinguishing grace to ourselves, to mourn over others; and inasmuch as secret things belong to the Lord, and we know not but some of whom we have at present but little hopes may at last be brought to the knowledge of the truth, we should be patient and forbearing, after

the pattern of our heavenly Father, and endeavour by every probable and prudent means to stir them up to repentance, remembering that they cannot be more distant from God than by nature we were ourselves.

II. The best relief against those discouragements we meet with from men is to raise our thoughts to God and heaven. For this the Lord Jesus is our precedent here. He said, "I thank Thee, O Father." The word signifies to confess, to promise or consent, and to praise. As if it had been said, "I glorify Thy wisdom in this respect, I acknowledge and declare it is Thy will, and I express My own consent and approbation." Our Lord's views of the divine counsels were perfect, and therefore His satisfaction was complete. It is said He "rejoiced in spirit" (Luke 10. 21) when He uttered these words. And the more we increase in faith and in the knowledge of God, the more we shall be satisfied in His appointments, and shall see and say, "He hath done all things well." It is needful for our comfort to be well established in the truth suggested in my text, that the Lord hath provided for the accomplishment of His own purposes, and that His counsels shall surely stand. From this doctrine we may infer,

1. That where the faithful labours and endeavours of ministers and others to promote the knowledge of grace and the practice of holiness fail of success, yet they shall be accepted. The servants of Christ may in their humble measure adopt the words of their Lord and Master in the prophet: "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and My God shall be My strength" (Isa. 49. 5). When He sent forth His first disciples, He directed them wherever they entered to say, "Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there," if there be any who thankfully accept your salutation and message, "your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again" (Luke 10. 5, 6). That is, your good wishes and endeavours shall not be lost for want of proper objects, but when they seem without effect on others, shall be productive of the happiest consequences to yourselves. You shall receive all you were desirous to communicate. Thus His ministers are to declare His whole will, whether men will hear, or whether they shall forbear. And if they do thus with a single eye to His glory, and in humble dependence upon His blessing, they are not answerable for the event, they shall in no wise lose their reward.

2. Faithful endeavours in the service of the gospel shall not wholly fail. Though all will not hear, some certainly shall both hear and obey. Though all are by nature equally averse and incapable, yet there shall be a willing people in the day of God's power (Psa. 110. 3). If the wise and prudent turn away from the truth, there are babes to whom it shall be revealed. The Lord renews unto us a pledge of His faithfulness in this concern every time the rain descends. For thus He has promised, "As the

rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55. 10, 11).

3. The divine sovereignty is the best thought we can retreat to for composing and strengthening our minds under the difficulties, discouragements and disappointments which attend the publication of the gospel. The more we give way to reasonings and curious inquiries, the more we shall be perplexed and baffled. When Jeremiah (Jer. 18. 6) had been complaining of some things which were too hard for him, the Lord sent him to the potter's house and taught him to infer, from the potter's power over the clay, the just right which the Lord of all hath to do what He will with His own. It is only the pride of our own hearts that prevents this consideration from being perfectly conclusive and satisfactory.

How many schemes derogatory to the free grace of God, tending to darken the glory of the gospel, and to depreciate the righteousness of the Redeemer, have taken their rise from vain, unnecessary attempts to vindicate the ways of God; or rather to limit the actings of Infinite Wisdom to the bounds of our narrow understandings, to sound the depths of the divine counsels with our feeble plummets, and to say to Omnipotence, "Hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther." But upon the ground of the divine sovereignty we may rest satisfied and stable; for if God appoints and overrules all according to the purpose of His own will, we have sufficient security both for the present and the future.

First, for the present. We may firmly expect, what Scripture and reason concur to assure us, that the Judge of all the earth will do right. Whatever to us appears otherwise in His proceedings should be charged to the darkness and weakness of our minds. We know that in every point of science difficulties and objections occur to young beginners which at first view may seem almost unanswerable; but as knowledge increases, the difficulties gradually subside, and at last we perceive they were chiefly owing to the defects of our apprehension. In divinity it is wholly so: "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." His revealed will is, like Himself, just, holy, pure in the whole, and perfectly consistent in every part. We may safely rest upon this general maxim, that the Judge of all the earth shall do right. Though He does not give us a particular account of His dealings, and we are not fully able to comprehend them, yet we ought, against all appearances and proud reasonings, to settle it firmly in our minds that everything is conducted worthy the views which God has given us of Himself in His holy Word, as a being of infinite justice, wisdom, goodness and truth.

Secondly, for the future. He has appointed a day when He will make it appear that He *has done* right. Though clouds and darkness are now upon His proceedings, they shall ere long be removed. When all His designs in providence and grace are completed; when the present imperfect state of things shall be finished; when the dead, small and great, are summoned to stand before Him, then the great Judge will condescend to unfold the whole train of His dispensations, and will justify His proceedings before angels and men; then every presumptuous cavil shall be silenced, every difficulty solved. His people shall admire His wisdom; His enemies shall confess His justice. The destruction of those who perish shall be acknowledged deserved, and of themselves; and the redeemed of the Lord shall ascribe all the glory of their salvation to Him alone. What we shall then see, it is now our duty and our comfort assuredly to believe.

III. The great subject of our Saviour's joy, and which, so far as it is apprehended, will bear up His servants above all their difficulties and disappointments; I mean, the consideration of the sovereign hand of God directing the success of His Word when and where He pleases; we must defer speaking of till the next opportunity. And we shall close at present with a few inferences from what has been said thus far by way of introduction.

1. Take heed how you hear. The gospel of salvation, which is sent to you, will be either a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death, to every soul of you. There is no *medium*. Though in a common and familiar way of speaking we sometimes complain that the gospel is preached without effect, there is in reality no possibility that it can be without effect. An effect it must and will have upon all who hear it. Happy they who receive and embrace it as a joyful sound, the unspeakable gift of God's love. To these it will be "the savour of life unto life." It will communicate life to the soul at first, and maintain that life, in defiance of all opposition, till it terminates in glory.

But woe, woe to those who receive it not! It will be to them "the savour of death unto death." It will leave them under the sentence of death, already denounced against them by the law which they have transgressed; and it will consign them to eternal death, under the heaviest aggravations of guilt and misery. Remember the doom of Capernaum and why it was denounced. Jesus preached amongst them the words of eternal life and they rejected Him. This was all. In other things, perhaps, they were no worse than their neighbours, and probably disdained to hear themselves judged worthy of a heavier punishment than Sodom and those cities which for their abominations were consumed with fire from heaven. But our Lord assures us, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for those who slight His

Word. For this guilt and condemnation is not confined to the Jews who rejected His Person, but extended to all who should at any time treat His gospel with contempt.

However inconsiderable His ministers are in other respects, if they faithfully deliver His message, He has declared Himself closely interested in the reception they meet with: "He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me" (Matt. 10. 40). It is therefore at your peril to treat what we say with indifference (if we speak agreeably to the Scripture): the Word of God which we preach will judge you at the last day.

2. Be afraid of being wise in your own eyes lest you should approach to the characters of those from whom the righteous God sees fit to hide the knowledge of those truths, without which they cannot be saved. The gospel is not proposed to you to ask your opinion of it, that it may stand or fall according to your decision; but it peremptorily demands your submission. If you think yourselves qualified to judge and examine it by that imperfect and depraved light which you call your reason, you will probably find reasons enough to refuse your assent. Reason is properly exercised in the ordinary concerns of life, and has so far a place in religious inquiries that none can or do believe the gospel without having sufficient reasons for it. But you need a higher light, the light of God's Spirit, without which the most glorious displays of His wisdom will appear foolishness to you.

If you come simple, dependent and teachable, if you pray from your heart with David, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law" (Psa. 119. 18), you will be heard and answered; you will grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if you neglect this and trust in yourselves, as supposing this promised assistance of the Holy Spirit unnecessary, the glorious light of the gospel will shine upon you in vain; for Satan will maintain such hold of you by this pride of your hearts as still to keep you in bondage and darkness, that you shall neither see it, nor desire to see it.

3. Those of you who have some spiritual apprehensions of these things, have reason to praise God that you see a *little*. You were once quite blind: you neither saw your disease nor your remedy. You could discern nothing of the excellence of Christ or the beauties of holiness. But now the eyes of your understanding are in some measure enlightened. It is the grace of God has made you thus far to differ from what you once were, and from what multitudes around you still are. Be thankful. Accept it as a token for good. Be not discouraged that the beginnings are small; but wait on the Lord, and they shall be increased. Seek Him by prayer. converse with your Bibles. Attend upon the public ordinances. In the humble use of these means (while you endeavour to

act faithfully according to the light you have already received), you shall gradually advance in wisdom and comfort.

The Christian growth is not instantaneous, but by degrees, as the early dawn increases in brightness till the perfect day (Prov. 4. 18), and as the corn comes forward surely, though unperceived (Matt. 13. 31, 32). In this manner your views of gospel truth shall increase in clearness, evidence and influence, till you are removed from this land of shadows to the regions of perfect light, to behold the truth as it shines in the Person of Jesus, without a veil and without a cloud for ever.

It may be considered that some things are missing from this sermon. However, it is the first of thirteen sermons on Matthew 11, verses 25 to 30 – so what was omitted in one sermon was dealt with in another.

The remarkable thing is that Newton made this complaint about the small success of preaching in the middle of the Evangelical Revival! What would he say today?

A FEW EXTRACTS FROM BISHOP HALL'S CONTEMPLATIONS

Concerning Manasseh

Say the worst against thyself, O thou clamorous soul; here is one that murdered men, defied God, worshipped devils, and yet finds the way to repentance. If thou be worse than he, deny, if thou canst, that to thyself, which God hath not denied thee, capacity of grace. In the meantime know that it is not thy sin but thine impenitence that bars heaven against thee.

I wonder not at Manasseh, either sinning or repenting. I wonder at Thy goodness, O Lord, who, after Thy just permission of his sin, calledst him thus graciously to repent, and so receivest him repenting.

O keep us from a presumption of grace, that we may repent; and raise us from a distrust of grace, when we have repented.

The Flight into Egypt

He that is everywhere the same makes all places alike to His. He makes the fiery furnace a gallery of pleasure, the lion's den a house of defence, the whale's belly a lodging chamber, Egypt a harbour.

Zaccheus

O mercy and justice well repaid! "This day is salvation come to this house." Lo, Zaccheus, that which thou givest to the poor is nothing to that which thy Saviour gives to thee. If thou restorest four to one, here is more than thousands of millions for nothing.

The Ten Lepers

“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” No word can better become the mouth of the miserable. I see not where we can meet with fitter patterns. Surely they were not verier lepers than we; why do we not imitate them in their actions, who are too like them in our condition? Whither should we seek but to our Jesus? How should we stand aloof in regard of our own wretchedness! How should we lift up our voice in the fervour of our supplication! What should we rather sue for than mercy? “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”

Christ before Pilate

“Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him.” Woe is me, dear Saviour; I feel Thy lashes; I shrink under Thy painful whippings; Thy nakedness covers me with shame and confusion. That tender and precious body of Thine is galled and torn with cords. Thou, that didst of late water the Garden of Gethsemane with the drops of Thy bloody sweat, dost now bedew the pavement of Pilate’s hall with the showers of Thy blood. How fully hast Thou made good Thy word, “I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting”! How can I be enough sensible of my own stripes? These blows are mine; both my sins have given them, and they give remedies to my sins. “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.”

Mary at the tomb

“They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.” Alas, good Mary, how dost thou lose thy tears? Of whom dost thou complain but of thy best Friend? Who hath removed thy Lord but Himself? Who, but His own Deity, hath taken away that human body out of that region of death? Neither is He now laid any more; He stands by thee, whose removal thou complainest of. Thus many a tender and humbled soul afflicts itself with the want of that Saviour whom it hath, but feeleth not....

Sometimes it pleaseth our Saviour to appear unto His not like Himself: His holy disguises are our trials.... Mary took Him for a gardener. Devout Magdalene, thou art not much mistaken. As it was the trade of the first Adam to dress the Garden of Eden, so was it the trade of the second to tend the garden of His church. He digs up the soil by seasonable afflictions; He sows in it the seeds of grace; He plants it with gracious motions; He waters it with His Word, yea with His own blood; He weeds it by wholesome censures....

O, be Thou such to me as Thou appearedst to Magdalene. Break up the fallows of my nature, implant me with grace, prune me with meet corrections, bedew me with the former and the latter rain; do what Thou wilt to make me fruitful.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

By Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

But what is the cross? It is not the mere wooden pole or some imitation of it, such as Romanists use. These we may safely leave behind us. We need not pitch our tent upon the literal Golgotha or in Joseph's garden. But the great truth which the cross embodies we can no more part with than we can part with life eternal. In this sense, to turn our back upon the cross is to turn our back upon Christ crucified – to give up our connection with the Lamb that was slain.

The truth is, that all that Christ did and suffered from the manger to the tomb forms one glorious whole, no part of which shall ever become needless or obsolete; no part of which we can ever leave without forsaking the whole. I am always at the manger, and yet I know that mere incarnation cannot save; always at Gethsemane, and yet I believe that its agony was not the finished work; always at the cross, with my face toward it and my eye on the crucified One, and yet I am persuaded that the sacrifice there was completed once for all; always looking into the grave, though I rejoice that it is empty and that "He is not here, but is risen"; always resting (with the angel) on the stone that was rolled away, and handling the grave-clothes, and realising a risen Christ, nay, an ascended and interceding Lord; yet on no pretext whatever leaving any part of my Lord's life or death behind me, but unceasingly seeing my connection with Him, as born, living, dying, buried and rising again, and drawing out from each part some new blessing day by day.

GOD REIGNING FROM THE MERCY SEAT

*Prayer Meeting Address by J. K. Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, on March 26th, 1926*

Reading: Psalm 99.

"The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble: He sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved."

It is a solemn, a weakening, humbling truth, and when felt, a power is in it, in this, that "the Lord reigneth." We believe in the sovereign reign of God, but it is wonderful to feel it. When we feel it, we tremble. Little things – the minutest circumstance belonging to such little things as we are; that every movement, every desire, every act of the heart and mind are all under the control of this divine Sovereign. Think of it. And every communication of this truth, "the Lord reigneth," surely begets in the heart this trembling. We see much independence of Him in our nature, much desire to get away from His rule. Selfishness, self-will,

self-strength, desire after the flesh, to walk just as we should like to walk, in ease, and have our own way, but this truth is a maul on the head of pride, of independence.

“Let the people tremble.” A religion without this trembling is presumption. A religion that does not bring this weakness that follows trembling is foolishness. “He sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved,” or, as in the margin, “stagger.” And the earth would stagger into nothingness under the wrath of God but for one wonderful truth in this verse: “He sitteth between the cherubims.”

This is our hope; this is the attraction to Him; this gives boldness in coming; this speaks mercy. Sitting between the cherubims tells us that there is a mercy seat there, as it is in Exodus where the Lord gives instructions to make the ark. Put the testimony into it, cover it, and on the cover, or the lid, put two cherubims who should be looking down upon the ark, and whose wings should stretch out, and, said the Lord to Moses, “I will meet with thee there.”

And this the church had some knowledge of, hence that prayer in the 80th Psalm, where the people of the Lord are stirred up to pray: “Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth”: the Leader of Joseph, the Leader of the tribes of Israel. These unbelieving people, these rebellious people, these people who, under divine chastening, had become most desolate, they said, “Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.” The shining is in mercy there; it is an intention in Him to communicate mercy; that is the intention, this word, “Shine forth.”

“I will meet with you there.” If we meet God anywhere else, He will be a terror to us and a destruction. He will take vengeance on our inventions. But if we meet Him and He is pleased to come and meet us there, as He sitteth between the cherubims, coming to manifest Himself as being there, then there is hope, living hope. My friends, look for Him there; go there; open thy mouth wide. “I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” This is the exercise of faith, the living desire of one who trembles at the sovereign reign and authority and power of God.

To see Him there between the cherubims is to see His terribleness veiled; it is to see His mercy free and sufficient; it is to see His power veiled, clothed in human nature; and so the trembling and the staggering are moderated. Useful they are indeed, to bring us to the dust, but they are moderated in our soul’s feelings, when we see the Lord sitting between the cherubims.

Now from this, one would say that it is a great blessing to be taught to pray and to approach God according to the exhortation: “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” You may sometimes say,

“How is it that the sins which I confess, which I bring before the Lord, still have that power over me that I deplore, that power that barrenises me, that puts a distance between my soul and God? How is it that the worldliness of my mind, the frivolity of my mind and the gadding after a variety of things, of which I am guilty, are not at all subdued?” Well, there is one passage in holy Scripture that has been an instruction on my heart more than once, I believe. When a child was brought to Christ, first to the disciples of Christ that they might cast out the devil that often tore the child, often cast him into the fire and into the water, the disciples could not do it. “I brought him to Thy disciples that they might cast him out but they could not.” And when the Lord, by a word, cast that devil out, privately the disciples said to Him, “Why could not we cast him out?”

Did you ever ask yourself why it is that I am such a prey to sin, that I am so overcome, so constantly overcome; that my desires seem little more than early dew that passeth away; little more than the smoke that goes out of the chimney? How is it? Now said the Lord, “This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.” That has been a very solemn word to me at times. It has painfully explained to me the shameful defeats that I have suffered at the hands of my sins. It has painfully explained to me again and again my barrenness and the barrenness of my speaking among you, as well as the barrenness of my own soul. And the sight of these failures and defeats would be more than one could bear, but for this: “He sitteth between the cherubims.” And when faith gets that sight it stirs up itself again, by the power that the sight communicates, to seek the Lord.

Do you suffer defeats? Do you get into darkness, into confusion? Do you get far off? Does sin drive you away? Does it make a bar between you and God and do you say sometimes, How is all this? I thought as I got older matters would be different; how is it? Old in years and old in sin. Said the Lord, “This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting,” and no living soul, rightly taught and rightly exercised, will say that is legal. Each one, rightly taught, rightly exercised, will say, Would the Lord but give me power. “He giveth power to the faint,” and Christ in that connection from which I have been quoting says, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.”

If you have got a grain of faith, it will go up toward the Lord; it will seek to lay hold of His power. “If thou canst believe, all things are possible.” What, victory possible? Victories in my soul; victories over my lusts, my evil tempers; victories over the frivolity of my mind, over the devil, and his temptations? Jesus Christ says, “All things are possible to him that believeth.” O that we had a stronger faith! There is a peculiar energy in faith, which you may have at times perceived in your own souls when it has been as if the Lord set the door wide open and set

no bar, allowed no barrier, but just sent home to your heart the invitation, "Come"; "Come unto Me"; "Open thy mouth wide"; "Pour out your heart before Me"; "Make known your troubles to Me"; "Trust in Me." And when that has been the case, there has been something done. The nearness of a sinner to God; the warmth of it; the solemnity of it; the holiness of it; the earnestness of it; the energy that you feel in your soul, can never be expressed in words.

O if I could but live near Him! If you could but live near Him, there is no scant supply there of grace. There is no weakness in Him. Is the Lord's hand shortened that it cannot save? Is His ear heavy, that it cannot hear? Faith in you, divine teaching in you, experience such as you have received from heaven, will tell you that there is nothing too hard for Him, no scant supply in Him, an exhaustless store of love and grace and mercy in Him. And we shall have to fight every step of the way. A tempting devil, a wicked heart, an alluring world, will make the way difficult, and faith is the only grace, accompanied as it always is by love, the only grace that God has given this great honour to, to fight. "Fight the good fight of faith." He has put honour on this grace because it honours Him. "Them that honour Me I will honour." This faith honours God; it believes Him. That is the honour it is to Him; it believes Him. Nature says, No, there is nothing in it all. Faith says, It is a substance. Faith says, I have got the evidence of it and in this way it is that faith honours God and He honours it.

It was this faith that Paul had in a lively exercise when he said to all who were with him in the ship which was to be broken up, Take some food; be of good cheer; you have fasted for a long time and there is no hope of our saving the ship. But be of good cheer, for I believe that it shall be even as it was said to me. The God, whose I am, and whom I serve appeared to me and said, "Fear not, Paul." I believe Him. Now that was faith honouring God, and it was that blessed safety that they all got that the Lord gave to the apostle in honouring his faith.

Well, dear friends, may we cry to heaven, as Hart says in another case, "Then cry we to heaven," that this grace may be increased in us. "Lord, increase our faith." Then we shall look in the direction of the mercy seat; then we shall, by occasions, get near the mercy seat. Then we shall have some experience of the sweet, blessed way that God dealt with Moses when Moses went in to speak to Him. Moses heard a voice talking to him. O that the Lord would do this – talk to us, speak with us.

"The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble." This kills the flippant religion of man; this kills his lightness and frivolity in religion. "Let the people tremble" at the view of the majesty of Him who sitteth upon the circle of the earth, whose throne is heaven, whose footstool is earth. "Let the people tremble" at the eternal God showing Himself sovereign Ruler of the skies, sovereign Disposer of men.

“Let the people tremble.” We handle things as if they were ours; we order our things as if we could do so; we dispose of matters as if they were at our disposal. O how much we have of that wicked spirit that is reprovèd in the Psalms: “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself”! I do believe that the Lord’s poor people, through their depraved nature, are very much disposed, without really realising it, to think that He is like themselves. We should tremble if anybody came and accused us of it perhaps, but a little heavenly light shining upon the movement of our minds, the intentions of our minds, and the thoughts we entertain of what we will do and what we will say and what we will refrain from doing, would show us that that very spirit is in us and a very solemn spirit it is, very wicked. O it is good to see Him reigning and good to wish Him to reign. Good to be enabled in faith to say, Reign o’er us as King and reign o’er our circumstances. Come into our houses, into our businesses, and into those things with which we must have to do; do come into them.

Well, we are dependants; we are dependants. We are dependent on God in all providential things. What a wicked spirit we have reprovèd by the Holy Ghost through James: “Ye say we will go and dwell in this city a year and buy and sell and get gain,” whereas ye ought to say “If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.” But he says, “What is your life?” You say you will dwell there a year. “What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” We are dependants, my friends, like we it or not, we are dependants.

Now what a mercy if, believing that, we are brought to this, to depend on Him. “I on Thy promises depend.” He has revealed Himself in His Word; He has revealed Himself in His promises; He has promised health and cure to sick souls, salvation to the lost, wisdom to the foolish, power to the faint. He has promised victory to those who have suffered defeat. Can you *depend* on Him in this? Faith will say, Lord, do speak these things to my heart, that I may *depend* on Thee. A naked word is not enough. The power of God in the word makes it spirit and life. Then how glad we are of His sovereignty, this ruling authority of God, and how dependent we are on Him for grace. No man can keep alive his own soul. There is a sovereignty in the communication of mercy, mercy that is needed and mercy that we do seek.

“Let the people tremble.” A trembling congregation is better than a merry one; a trembling church is better than a presumptuous one. God save us from the religion of the day; God save us from those things which are evil in His sight, and which, if we read with understanding the Scriptures, we shall know they condemn.

“He sitteth between the cherubims.” O that we may see Him there; it is a beautiful sight, a sight that encourages, similar to that figure that is used in the Scripture: “I do set My bow in the cloud,” and the

revelation that the prophet Ezekiel got when he saw One sitting above upon the throne, and the likeness of the appearance was as the bow in the cloud in the day of rain. One of the most beautiful things in the Scripture, the bow in the cloud, God's covenant token that He will no more drown the earth. So when faith sees that, it goes out to the Lord in living hope.

"The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble: He sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved." May we never, never, be outside such Scriptures. Amen.

THE SIN OF LAODICEA

By J.C. Philpot

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" (Rev. 3. 17, 18).

These words, I need scarcely remark, are addressed to the church of Laodicea. The seven churches in Asia Minor are thought by some to represent so many distinct phases or appearances of the church from the Lord's ascension to His coming a second time in glory. But whether it be so or not, one thing is certain: that the messages addressed to them are pregnant with the richest instruction; that they are adapted to the wants and exigencies of the church of God in all time; and that they form a part of the inspired Word of truth, of that treasury out of which the Holy Ghost applies promises, precepts and counsels, as the church of God from time to time needs. Of all these churches, that of Laodicea seems to have been most deeply sunk, to have departed most widely from the right ways of the Lord.

But we are not to suppose that the church of Laodicea had drunk in erroneous principles. We have no charge brought against her that she had fallen into error or heresy. She, no doubt, maintained the truth; but *how* did she maintain it? *In form, but not in power; in the letter, but not in the spirit.* She had all the requisites of a church, as to external forms; but the life-giving Spirit of God was sadly wanting. Yet, with all her declensions and all her decays, she was doubtless a church of God; for she is addressed as such. The Lord gives counsels, such as He gave her, to those only that are His. But she had departed from the state in which she was when first named in the New Testament, for we have her honourably mentioned about thirty years preceding this time in the

Epistle to the Colossians (4. 13-16). Those thirty years had witnessed a great change in her. Many of her gracious members had been taken home, and circumstances had introduced into her communion those who appeared to be, but were not, partakers of the grace of God. Thus, though she maintained all the external appearance of a church of God, the eye of eternal Purity and Omniscience detected in her those symptoms which marked her decay, and probably were the prelude to her utter excision.

In considering these words, we may look at the state of the Laodicean church.

With respect to the state of the Laodicean church, we may observe that there was her *real* state, and there was her *fancied* state. These did not agree. In her own opinion, she was “rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing.” But the Lord knew her to be in a very different state, actually and experimentally, from what she thought of herself, and the standing she maintained among her sister churches. He knew that with all her pretensions she was really “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” Let us, then, take a glance at her *fancied* state.

What she says of her *fancied* state, she no doubt uttered in the honesty of her heart. Like a person in a consumption, she was unaware of the malady preying upon her vitals; she sincerely believed she was what she appeared to be. It was the language of sincerity, though it was the language of mistake. She had no eyes to see her spiritual condition, no tender conscience to feel it, no spirit of discernment to be aware of it. When, therefore, she said she was “rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing,” she really believed that things were with her as she professed them to be. But the Lord’s eye viewed her far, far differently.

This, then, was the language of her lips, “*I am rich.*” But what made her utter these words? Doubtless she had a sound knowledge of the doctrines of grace; and holding them firmly in her judgment, and knowing that the church was enriched with all heavenly treasures in Christ, she therefore laid claim to a *personal* interest in these riches. Thus, merely because she held the doctrines of grace, she believed she was “rich” in God’s favour, “rich” in the mercies that God bestows on His people in Christ Jesus. But she was completely ignorant all the time of her desperate bankruptcy.

In this she resembled what often takes place naturally. How many a merchant or tradesman bears the character of possessing great wealth! Nay, he himself, from want of a knowledge of his affairs, of the state of his books, and of his outstanding engagements, may believe himself to be what he is generally thought – a man of property and substance. But a crash comes, and his name is in the Gazette.

Such appears to have been the state of the church at Laodicea. Because she had a knowledge of the doctrines of grace, because she maintained the ordinances of God's house, because she had not fallen into open sin, because she had not drunk into error or heresy, because she maintained her standing among the churches, because they highly extolled her as a church which contended for the truth as it is in Jesus, she took all these external appearances for inward divine realities; and therefore, in the language of honesty, though in the language of self-deception, she said, "I am rich." "Look at me," she boldly said. "I maintain an exalted standing among the churches of God; I hold firmly the doctrines of grace; all the treasures of Christ are therefore mine."

"And increased with goods." Not only did she boast that she was rich, as not doubting her interest in God's everlasting love, and as being blessed with heavenly riches in Christ Jesus; but she went a step further: "I am increased with goods." She possessed a sound and clear judgment; she knew perfectly truth from error; who were the ministers of God, and who the ministers of Satan; who preached with power, and who preached in the letter; who were right in the things of God, and who were wrong. She had a keen eye to discover the first breakings out of heresy, and she had a clear knowledge in her judgment what were the operations of God in the soul. Outwardly, too, she was in a flourishing condition. She could boast, perhaps, of "a talented pastor"; had probably many wealthy members; had large accessions, and was spreading on the right hand and on the left. And having this carnal prosperity, she could boast, "I am increased with goods." Her members, too, had many spiritual gifts; some could pray, some exhort, some open up Scripture, some converse on the things of God. Thus all seemed prosperity, while there was rottenness at the very heart's core.

But besides all this, she could go even a step farther, and say, she stood in "need of nothing." She was not sensible, as the people of God deeply are, of her poverty, want and necessity. *She* had "need of nothing." *She* had that unwavering assurance, that undoubting confidence, that firm standing in the things of God, to which nothing could be added. *She* wanted no more knowledge; for she had the perfections of knowledge in herself. *She* needed no communications of grace to her soul. As long as she maintained the *doctrine* of grace, she wanted nothing of the *power* of grace. She wanted no heavenly testimonies, no divine smiles, no sweet assurances from the Lord's own lips, no breaking in of the light of the Lord's countenance upon her soul, no gracious whisperings, "I have loved thee." She had no temptations to be delivered from, no snares to be broken, no idols to be purged out of her heart, no worldly spirit from which to be cleansed. She had "need of

nothing.” She was so firm in her own standing, so wise in her own conceit, so built up in pride, ignorance, and presumption, that she would look God in the face, and tell Him that she had “need of nothing.”

Can we believe – could we believe, if it were not the express testimony of God – that ever a church of God could be in this self-deluded state? Yet, doubtless, there are hundreds of churches in this land on whom the Laodicean stamp is as deeply marked, and who are as completely eaten up with pride and wrapped up in delusion as ever the church of Laodicea was....

How the church needed the Lord’s admonition: “I counsel thee to buy of Me ... that thou mayest see”!

1555: THE YEAR OF MARTYRDOMS (3)

Among the Marian martyrs, in addition to many humble folk, are numbered four bishops. Hooper, Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer were four of the leading figures of the Reformation, but neither their eminence nor ability could save them from a cruel death.

John Hooper

John Hooper was one of the first to suffer. It is thought that at one time he was a Cistercian monk; but whilst at Oxford University he was brought to a knowledge of God and the truth. During the reign of Henry VIII he was compelled more than once to flee from the country. His meetings with the continental Reformers proved beneficial and he was led to see the truth more clearly.

At the accession of Edward VI he returned and became known as the leader of the very advanced Reformers. He was a champion of the doctrines of grace. Earnest and eloquent, he preached regularly in London and was soon appointed Bishop of Gloucester. For this work, Foxe says he had all the qualities Timothy requires of a bishop. He loved the souls of the people and laboured to preach the Word of salvation. His hospitality was great and his table ever spread for beggars.

Soon after Mary became queen, he was imprisoned and deprived of his bishopric. He was treated in a disgusting fashion, being placed in a filthy prison which made him ill. Nevertheless he remained faithful. “I have taught the truth with my tongue and with my pen heretofore,” he said, “and hereafter shall confirm the same by God’s grace with my blood.”

In the end he was brought to Gloucester to be burned outside his own cathedral. His imprisonment had had an effect, and he limped to the

place of execution, leaning on a staff. The people mourned bitterly for one whom they had loved, but were amazed to see his face, usually most solemn, now shining and cheerful. His death was dreadfully prolonged as the wood would not burn, but the large memorial which now marks the spot records that in the end “not accepting deliverance, he was burned to ashes.” His dying prayer may still be read in the little museum which was his house. All fear was removed and he looked forward to the blessedness of heaven which was his by the mercy of God.

Hugh Latimer

The genial Hugh Latimer was a far different man from Hooper. Nevertheless, standing for the same truth, he had to follow the same path of suffering. Born of yeoman stock, he came from Leicestershire and was educated at Cambridge. A great orator and bigoted papist, he was renowned for his opposition to the Reformation. But God having a purpose of love and mercy toward him, he was (as Foxe quaintly puts it) “caught in the blessed net of God’s Word.”

A young man, Thomas Bilney, was very zealous in the cause of the Reformation and longed that this brilliant young popish priest should know God’s grace. One day, he begged that he might make confession to Latimer, an everyday event with Roman Catholics. Latimer consented and took him aside, but to his amazement he heard Bilney confess to the blessed way of salvation he had found through Christ revealed in the Scriptures by the Holy Ghost. Bilney’s words sank deep into Latimer’s soul and now he preached the faith he once laboured to destroy.

Little by little, he was led more deeply and often used to confer with Bilney on what became known as “Heretics’ Hill.” From 1529 onwards, he had many opponents and during his time as vicar of a village in Wiltshire, he was often in danger. Nevertheless, despite much trouble, he gained public favour and through the good offices of Henry VIII’s minister, Cromwell, was appointed Bishop of Worcester. The martyrdom of his friend Bilney and other acquaintances caused him to see the need for a firm stand and in 1539 he felt compelled to resign his bishopric. Soon afterwards, he was imprisoned and little is known of what happened during the following eight years.

When Edward became king, Latimer’s voice rang out again. He declined his old bishopric but constantly preached before the king. He was the great preacher of the Reformation. Fearless, simple, scriptural, his preaching was deeply loved and had far-reaching effects. His emphasis was the need for true, spiritual religion rather than ritual and show, and the need of moral righteousness to adorn the doctrines professed.

Ill-health diminished his sphere of activity, but as soon as Mary became queen, he was sent for as a dangerous man. Brought to London, he found himself in prison with Ridley and Cranmer.

Nicholas Ridley.

Nicholas Ridley was the great scholar, the brilliant intellect of the Reformation. Born in Northumberland, he was educated at Cambridge. Here he read deeply into the Fathers and the classics and became renowned for his learning. We have no account of how he came to renounce the Roman Catholic faith. It appears that, like many others, his eyes were opened gradually. Little by little, he became convinced of the need to take a firm stand.

Thus, on taking his first living at Herne in 1538, he began to preach against the confessional. Then the true doctrine of the Lord's Supper was revealed to him, and ever afterwards he was an uncompromising opponent of the Mass. He contended that the Mass was blasphemous, purporting to sacrifice Christ again. After becoming Bishop of Rochester, he exerted a great influence on Cranmer, and won him over to the Reformed view of the Lord's Supper.

During Edward's reign, Ridley was appointed Bishop of London and set about reforming his diocese. Foxe recounts how the people "swarmed about him like bees, and coveting the sweet flowers and wholesome juice of the fruitful doctrine, which he not only preached but exemplified by his life, as a lanthorn to the eyes and senses of the blind, in such pure order and holiness of life that even his very enemies could not reprove him." On Edward's death it was inevitable that this great preacher and scholar should be seized. Thus it came about that he found himself in the Tower in company with Cranmer and Latimer.

Faithful Unto Death

In prison, Ridley sought to confirm Latimer in the truth. The trial of each was a disgrace; neither was given real opportunity to answer. After refusing many opportunities to recant, they were on October 16th, 1555, brought to the stake at Oxford. Many mourned as they saw the aged preacher, in threadbare gown and wearing a new shroud, following the theologian, clad in velvet tippet and nightcap, black gown and slippers. The scene at the stake is known to all. May Latimer's dying words remain for ever true: "We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as I trust shall never be put out!"

Thomas Cranmer

The fourth of the Bishops to die for the faith was none other than the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer. He had been appointed to this office as far back as 1533 and had become one of Henry VIII's

right-hand men. During that reign he had been called to play a large part in the confused political events of the age. Nevertheless, his mind had inclined more and more to Reformed doctrine, and he was largely responsible for the English Bible being placed in each church. During Edward's reign he was a leading Reformer and thus he ensured the Calvinistic character of the Book of Common Prayer.

After Edward's death, he was imprisoned, and what a long, gruelling imprisonment he had to endure! After two and a half years, in which his enemies treacherously placed before him bright hopes and dreadful fears, in his weakness, he faltered and recanted. How great this triumph of his enemies appeared! Nevertheless, out of weakness he was made strong, and when called upon publicly to make known his errors before he died at Oxford, he gloriously maintained the truth for which he had stood for long years. His end is well known. With a clear conscience and God-given bravery, he cried out in the flames that the hand that had signed the recantation should suffer first. And calling "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," he passed to perfect peace and his everlasting inheritance, March 21st, 1556.

More than Conquerors

Within two years, Mary was dead. All her efforts to erase the truth were vain. The church of God was founded on a rock and the gates of hell had not prevailed against it. The servants of the Lord had overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of their testimony.

"Keen was the trial once;
Bitter the cup of woe,
When martyred saints, baptized in blood
Christ's sufferings shared below.

"Bright is their glory now,
Boundless their joy above.
Where, on the bosom of their God,
They rest in perfect love."

If, therefore, anything ought to be accounted worthy of the most attentive consideration, it is indeed the covenant of grace. Here a way is shewn unto a better paradise than the earthly, and to a more certain and stable happiness than that from which Adam fell. Here new hopes shine upon ruined mortals, which by so much ought to be the more acceptable, by how much it came more unexpected. Here conditions are offered to which eternal life is annexed; conditions not again by us to be performed, which would cause the mind to despond; but by Him who departed not this life before He had truly said, It is finished.

Witsius

THROUGH MANY DANGERS

*The autobiography of Isaac Lewis (1823-1896), for over twenty years
pastor at Staplehurst, Kent
(Continued from page 199)*

Now I have to speak a little about leaving my birthplace. My brother and I were partners in the little fishing vessel. I continued with him till we had paid off the debt which we had contracted in having our vessel repaired. After this I asked for my share of the profits, which would amount to about six shillings per week. My brother refused, and said unless I could force him by law I should never have more than I had received. I felt that if he could act the rogue towards me in this way, and rob me of that which belonged to me, I would let him have it; but it was very trying to flesh and blood. My fleshly feelings were terribly ruffled at times, but grace reigned; which, I trust, it ever will do in me, over all the powers of sin, to the praise of a triune Jehovah. "There is a time and purpose for everything under the sun." And so I found it. I had fifteen shillings a week wages.

I had a brother-in-law, a sailor, who came and asked me to go with him to the north of England, as he said "good money" was to be earned there in ship sailing. I told him I must have time to consider. I was enabled to make it a matter of prayer to the Lord; I told Him if it would be for His glory and the good of His people I would go. I was very much tried about it. If I went I must leave my father's house and kindred, the people of God to whom I felt a union, and the little chapel where God Almighty quickened my dead soul into life, and opened my poor, blind eyes. I can truthfully say that, although nearly thirty years ago, the place is sacred to me to this day. I can say, "Bethel," with good old Jacob, who so named the holy spot; for there he found his God. I had three brothers on my mother's side, and I felt I could not leave them, as I believed they were grace-taught men. I thought I must decline going. But no; I *must* go; and I have been led to see the wisdom of God in it all. The bounds of our habitation are fixed, which I have proved to this day. I begged of the Lord for guidance. All I could get was, Abraham "went out, not knowing whither he went." The place was appointed of God for him; and so it was with me. The trials and enemies he had to meet he was a stranger to, and so it was with me.

I agreed to go. The evening before I left my home, my brothers came to say "Farewell." I never wish to have such a parting again. I was leaving all that was near and dear to me – my wife and friends in Christ; and then to go into the wide world of sin and misery, I seemed to shrink at the thought of it; yet I felt a power within propelling me forward. I have been enabled since then to see it was according to the secret purposes of an all-wise God that I should go. It was here I had to do

business on the mighty waters, and learn many things I could not do at home in my quiet cot.

But to return to my narrative. We started at the time appointed for London, where we arrived about twelve o'clock on Saturday. We went to the Herring Wharf, and booked our places as deck passengers for Middlesborough-on-Tees. We left some time in the night. The wind blew, the rain was heavy; the sailors let us go down into the hold; our bed was a heap of coals. I differed a little from poor Jacob. He had stones, and I had coals for my pillow: I was on water, he was on land.

After a short passage, we arrived safely at Middlesborough, and were kindly received by a niece who was living there. We soon set out to look for a ship, to find employment. I knew little more of my duty as a sailor than a man from the ploughtail. O how I did beg of the dear Lord to give me wisdom and understanding! My brother-in-law got a ship for himself and me, which was bound for Hamburg, in Germany. We set sail and proceeded on our passage across the North Sea with a fair wind. Nothing particular occurred during this voyage, except that one night the mate of the ship sent me up aloft to do some work on the fore yard. When I got there I did not know how to do it. The mate kept shouting for me to do it; the devil was roaring in my soul, and conscience reproaching me for having left my quiet home. When lying on the yard, these thoughts were hurled into my mind: "Let go your hand-hold; you will then fall into the sea, and this will be an easy way for you to get rid of all your troubles."

Whether I did let go or not, I cannot say. The ship was rolling along before a smart breeze of wind at the time. One thing I do know, that I was preserved through sovereign grace, love and mercy, by the eternal Three-in-One, flowing freely to me through the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We made the ship-light in the mouth of the River Elbe. We shortened sail, reefed the topsails, and laid the ship to on the larboard tack. The snow fell so fast that we could not see twenty yards ahead of the ship.

All at once one of the men cried out, "There is a ship just under our lee bow." Before we could do anything with the ship, we were under the ship's bows, and the first chop she made on our ship she broke our larboard bow anchor quite in two, and the next quite smashed our cat, wales and bulwarks. If the ship had made one more chop at us we must all have sunk like a stone; for our own ship was heavily laden, and the other ship was light. Truly I had to learn here that all my times are in the hands of God, and all events at His command; for He preserved both crew and ship. The other ship rose the third time with such fury that it appeared as if she must cut us down in a moment; but instead of this she fell in the trough of the sea, without doing the least further injury to us. We dropped astern of the light ship, when the captain gave orders for the

port anchor to be let go. I remonstrated with the captain upon the uselessness of letting go that anchor, because I told him it had no flukes to it. The other men said it had; so the anchor was let go. Presence of mind was given me to drop the lead on the bottom, as I knew that would prove whether the anchor was right or not. It soon told its own tale; the ship was going astern very fast. I called the attention of the captain to it, who soon ordered the other anchor to be let go; but only just in time to bring the ship up clear of another ship's bows.

We then cast lots to know who should have the first watch; which fell upon me. My feelings were sharper than the weather, which was so severe that it froze the legs of my trousers. I felt to be a second Jonah, a poor, cast-out wretch, according to feeling and position; but still there was the cry, and the look once again to His holy temple. I cried for deliverance. In the morning the wind blew very hard from the W.N.W. After much trouble we got up our anchor, and the broken one, and then set sail up the river many miles. At sunset we came to anchor in safety. The wind soon changed round to the opposite point, and blew as hard that way; but through the good hand of my God upon us, we were in safety.

We delivered our cargo, and returned to England, when I left this ship and soon got another, where I was made mate. In this situation I had another narrow escape from drowning. This occurred in the north of England, in the old harbour at West Hartlepool. When transporting the ship from one part of the harbour to another, I was standing on the ship's rail, bearing her off from the stone wharf, when my feet slipped up and I fell between the ship and the stone wharf. My head came with such force against the stones that I was insensible, and do not remember anything that happened afterwards. O how wonderfully arranged are all our mercies! The captain of another vessel saw me fall, instantly sprang on to our ship's deck, caught up a spar that was lying on our deck, and put it down just where I was. As soon as the spar touched me, I came to my senses, and grasped it in a moment. The captain felt I had hold of it, and soon drew my head above the water. The boat came and took me in; and who can deny but that this was directed by the unerring wisdom of an infinite God, who overruleth all things, and who manages our meanest affairs.

But O what a contrast between this deliverance and the former one! At this time I suffered greatly from the ill-effects of gas water, which I swallowed when in the water. I was insensible for a day and night. The captain went to the doctor for some fever mixture, which, by the blessing of God, had the desired effect. I gradually recovered. But O how lifeless and cold I felt! There was no heartfelt feeling of gratitude to Almighty God for His marvellous interposition for me. As the dear Lord would have it, I was perfectly restored to health again.

I must now speak a little of my travels in the north of England. I searched for a place of truth, but could find none until, through bad weather, we were obliged to put into a port where we did not intend to go. Truly this was of the Lord. This port was Sunderland, in the county of Durham. It was on a Sunday evening. The thought came to me, "Why, this is the place where Samuel Turner* preached; and I believe he was a man of God." The next day I went in search of the chapel and, being in the way, the dear Lord met with me, and directed my steps aright; so that I found the chapel.

On the Wednesday I met with the people. When I was put into a seat, I saw a hymnbook which, to my surprise, was written by good old John Kent. I said to myself, "The truth is declared here." And so I found it. A converted Jew (as he called himself) was there that evening, whom I had seen some months before at Middlesborough-on-Tees. After the service, he went to the leading deacon, told him a deplorable tale, and begged for help. He related his experience, as he called it; but I found he was contradicting his former statement. I stepped forward, and spoke to the deacon, as I felt bound to expose his deceit. The poor Jew lost his temper, and took himself off. The deacon thanked me kindly.

One of the members, who had been listening to our conversation, also spoke kindly to me, and asked from whence I came. I replied from Burnham, in Essex. I have never disowned my country or birthplace, which are dear to me. I was once killed there, and twice made alive. "Well," this person said, "do you know Maldon, in Essex?" My reply was, "Yes." He then asked if I knew Mr. Collins, and I replied, "I know no man better; I was cut down under his ministry." He said, "My mother is a member with him." I asked her name, and he said it was Alson. When I told him I knew her, he would have me go home with him, and we became intimate friends.

During the time I was at Sunderland, a minister came from a little place close to North Shields to speak to these people on a Sunday. The deacon asked me to go and spend an hour with this minister at his lodgings, which I did. We had a comfortable time in speaking of the Lord's dealings with us. We wept and rejoiced together. Before we parted, he asked me to what place I generally traded. I told him West Hartlepool; when he informed me a few friends of truth met there for worship, and that he went once a month to speak to them. Truly this was good news to me. I can say it was far more precious than all the gold and silver I had gathered from the north of England. How true it is that "the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and He delighteth in his way"! I never did delight in my ways since the Lord called me by divine grace; that is, when faith has been in exercise; for all my ways, as a man, have been and ever will be contrary to God's ways. How true that

* Samuel Turner (1778-1854), author of hymns 1104 and 1131 in Gadsby's.

“it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” No; it is in my precious Lord Jesus Christ that my soul delighteth. He says, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

(*To be continued*)

BOOK REVIEWS

The Old Evangelicalism: Old Truths for a New Awakening, by Iain H. Murray; hardback; 226 pages; price £14.00; **Majesty in Misery: Dark Gethsemane: Select Sermons on the Passion of Christ**, by C.H. Spurgeon; hardback; 279 pages; price £14.00; both published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Iain Murray's books are always interesting and well-written. The subject is very important – the value of the *old* evangelicalism, as set over against the new. The seven chapters were originally addresses given by the author.

There is much that is excellent in *The Old Evangelicalism*. At the beginning (page xi) William Booth's warning is given. He believed that in the twentieth century we would have “religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God and heaven without hell.” How true his prophecy has proved!

Mr. Murray solemnly warns against easy religion, and especially the failure of preachers to set forth the majesty of God and the demands of His holy law. He warns against professed converts “who never knew that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom” (page 14). The vital necessity of the Holy Ghost's work in regeneration is insisted on.

But then the author goes on to a theme which we do not call “the old evangelicalism” – a theme that has been brought forward often recently: that God loves the non-elect and has a sincere desire for their salvation. This all seems a mass of contradiction as the author professes his belief in Calvinistic doctrine. These things are particularly dealt with in the chapter on “The Cross – the Pulpit of God's Love.” This was never “the old evangelicalism” of Gill, and later Gadsby, Warburton and Kershaw, among the Baptists; Huntington, and men like John Vinall and John Grace, among the Independents; and numerous ministers in the state church from the time of Dr. Hawker, down through such men as Dr. Doudney, James Ormiston and in later years Thomas Houghton. They would have dubbed Iain Murray's gospel as “new” evangelicalism, a “yea and nay gospel.”

The same things are contended for in the chapter, “What Can We Learn from John Wesley?” Mr. Murray confesses that his views on Wesley have radically changed (page 137), as was evident in a recent book, *Wesley and the Men Who Followed*. But what *can* we learn from the Wesleys? Obviously many good things – otherwise J.C. Philpot would not have chosen their hymns to be included in his supplement to Gadsby's. But surely we are not to learn from them (page 128): “They were right to sing:

‘The arms of love that compass me
Would all mankind embrace!’”

Remarkably, Spurgeon's sermons were published by the same publisher at exactly the same time as *The Old Evangelicalism*, and more remarkably seem to be the answer to Mr. Murray's views. These beautiful Christ-exalting sermons on Gethsemane and Calvary are "the old evangelicalism."

Usually C.H. Spurgeon is contended for as a champion of the free offer, but one can look in vain for any free offer in *Majesty in Misery*. True, Spurgeon calls on all his hearers without exception to look to the Lord, to believe in Christ, etc., and that immediately; but he invariably adds, "The Lord help you to ..." or, "The Lord enable you"

"O that He would draw many to Himself tonight!" (page 13).

"I pray the Lord, by His Spirit, to lead them [the hearers] to put their trust in this loving Saviour" (page 26).

"So may it be, for Christ's sake" (page 41).

"May God the Holy Ghost constrain thee to do so [come, and believe]" (page 58).

"The Lord deliver you from such a doom [the portion of the wicked] by leading you now to yield to Jesus, and to believe in His name. May He grant this prayer for Jesus' sake" (page 75).

These are the endings of just the first five sermons.

The other thing – "the old evangelicalism" – Spurgeon is extremely clear on the extent of the atonement; he continually makes it clear that Christ died only for His people. "The love of God to His chosen" (page 20); "the everlasting love of God towards His people" (page 24); His "death on the cross, by which He was to purchase eternal redemption for all His people" (page 15); "He hath taken the whole load of the sin of His elect" (page 70); the "purpose was the salvation of His chosen, and that salvation is secured" (page 70). (In fairness, Mr. Murray says he himself believes in particular redemption.)

We firmly believe that "the old truths for a new awakening" are not reverting to Wesleyanism, or to a moderate kind of "Calvinism" which can speak of a general love for all and God's desire for the salvation of all, but rather a faithful preaching of covenant realities, covenant love, covenant blood, covenant salvation. This, in past years under the influence of the Holy Ghost, has produced "a new awakening." We believe nothing else will today.

Philip and the Revival in Samaria, by Geoffrey Thomas; paperback; 120 pages; price £6.00; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

It is a strange thing that very little has been written about Philip. This book helps to make up this deficiency. The 8th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles gives a remarkable and most interesting account of how God used Philip – both in the revival that broke out in Samaria, and then in preaching to the Ethiopian eunuch. "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them" (verse 5). "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus" (verse 35).

Geoffrey Thomas has been minister for many years in Aberystwyth, and no doubt many of our readers remember his address in Trafalgar Square at the time the Pope visited England. The publishers describe this book as a "thought-provoking and heart-warming study."

The first chapter is "The Man God Used," and deals with Philip's qualification. In Acts chapter 6 he was among the first seven deacons, chosen as

“full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.” The author emphasises God’s preparation. Philip was full of the Holy Ghost, yet he had to act as a deacon, serving tables and seeing to the wants of old women.

Chapter 2 is “The Place God Sent Him.” There is an emphasis on divine authority in a God-sent preacher:

“How the Christian church needs to recapture this high view of the preaching ministry!” (page 41).

“We need to be more aware of the authority that rests upon the preachers whom our Lord has called” (page 44).

“Where is the sense of awe that marked the presence of the Spirit of God in the early church?” (page 45).

Chapter 3 is “The Coming of the Spirit,” based on verses 15-16: “The Holy Ghost ... as yet He was fallen upon none of them,” and chapter 4, “One Man as Important as a City of Men” deals with the wonderful meeting with the Ethiopian eunuch.

Several questions are asked and answered in this book. What is it to be filled with the Holy Spirit? What kind of person does God use? What is revival? Is it a sovereign work of God by His Spirit?

An interesting and helpful book.

OBITUARY

Ernest William Lewis, member of the church at Bethel Chapel, Robertsbridge from 1988 until its closure, passed away on March 10th, 2005, aged 89. The following account was written by him:

He who findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour from the Lord (Prov. 18. 22)

It pleased Almighty God in His many mercies to me, a poor undeserving sinner, to bless me with a dear wife, Phyllis, who by His grace was made useful in bringing me to a knowledge of my lost state before Him. We met at Ebenezer Chapel [Hastings] in 1932 and came to be good friends in 1935. This continued until my wife’s homecall in 1998.

God-fearing homes

We were both brought up in God-fearing homes and attended the means of grace, the Sabbath school and Bible class. However, it is to be feared that we held the things of the world in one hand and the things of God in the other and would have so continued, not knowing that we were without God and without hope in the world.

Wartime experiences

When the war came, I was called up for service in April 1940 and as I was under draft orders, we decided to marry on May 6th, 1940. Returning to my unit on May 10th, I was immediately dispatched to France, where I was to witness some terrible happenings. After some very trying and anxious days and nights I was spared and returned to England on May 29th, but I was not as truly thankful for this great delivering mercy as I should have been. I served in several places

in the United Kingdom and then returned to France in 1944 where I was to witness further terrible scenes. My life was spared on two occasions when those of my comrades were taken, but again how I proved the truth of the hymnwriter when he said, "Law and terrors do but harden, all the time they work alone."

Back to civilian life

I returned to civilian life at the end of 1945 and took up my old employment. It was good to resume normal life with my loved ones and we started going to chapel again. When the family were old enough, we took them to Sunday school. This went on for several years, until one day, Phyllis asked me if I could get home as early as possible on Wednesday, as she would like to go to chapel. This did not trouble me, as I thought, "Poor dear, she has had a lively family to tire her and it will make a break for her." Thus I was quite willing to care for the family while she went. This continued for several years and she would tell me what the Lord's servants had spoken about, how she got to know several of them and the conversations with them, but in my ignorance of such matters, this fell on deaf ears.

A dear wife called by grace

However, one dark evening in November 1956, Phyllis was late coming home and I was very concerned for her, as she was of a very nervous disposition. When she eventually arrived home, I asked her, "What kept you, my dear?" She told me how she had become concerned about her soul and had been under solemn conviction of sin. God had heard her cry for mercy and had so blessed her soul that she had been before the church and given her testimony. This had been well received and she was to be baptized the following Wednesday, November 26th, 1956 by Mr. S. Delves. She said, "I wanted to tell you all about it, but as you seem quite indifferent to these matters, I kept it to myself."

An angry response

Well, I was completely stunned, but as the truth of the matter entered in, I was like Saul of Tarsus, breathing out threatening and slaughter. In my anger, I said to Almighty God, "Why don't you leave us alone? We are quite happy as we are." For that I rightly had to smart for many days afterwards, but I have been so thankful that I did not express my feelings with my lips, as it would have so grieved her. The rest of the week and until Wednesday the following week I was seething inside.

A faithful, praying uncle

When the day of the baptism came, and out of affection for Phyllis, I carried her case down to Ebenezer Chapel. How I remember climbing Ebenezer Road with bitterness in my heart. We arrived at the chapel and were greeted by Mr. W. Relfe, who was a deacon, and his wife. They were Phyllis's uncle and aunt. Auntie Grace took her bag and went with her to the vestry to get changed. I walked to my seat, followed by Uncle Will. He placed his hand on my shoulder and said, "This is a wonderful day for me. I have prayed for it for so long and now it has come to pass." With tears in his eyes, he then said to me, "I do sincerely hope and pray that you will be the next one." In my state of mind, I turned to him and said sharply, "Never in your life, so you can forget that." The poor man was shattered. However, later on I told him I was sorry for what I had said and the spirit in which I said it and he lovingly forgave me.

Dealt with at my wife's baptism

When it was almost time for the service to commence, Phyllis and her aunt took up their seat at the front of the chapel and my dear one turned and smiled at me, which was a great relief to me, as I had such great fear of her choking in the water. I then picked up my Bible, opened it at random and found myself reading the eighth chapter of Romans. The words I knew well, but tonight, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" stood out. They said to me, "Your dear one is not under condemnation, but you are." As dear Mr. Herbert Dawson used to say, "If your conscience is in good working order, it will tell you." Mine certainly did. Many base sins I had committed flooded into my mind and others I had forgotten too. I so began to tremble, that I was oblivious to the service taking place. Satan came in and said, "Don't worry about it. You will feel alright when you have had a good night's sleep," but he was a liar, for it was many a long day before I knew sweet sleep again.

Conviction and vain attempts at self help

This solemn conviction went on until the autumn of 1957. It affected my whole life and I feared as I had never feared before. Then I foolishly thought, "Perhaps the answer is to try and pray more earnestly and be more diligent in reading God's Word and to contain myself in what I say and think. Alas, how I solemnly proved the language of the hymnwriter when he said, "The more I strove against sin's power, I sinned and stumbled but the more." So it was with me. I continued to go to chapel, but it seemed an awful ordeal.

Relevant ministry, but no immediate deliverance

In the autumn of 1957 I said to Phyllis, "If I don't get some help tonight, I don't feel I shall be able to go again," but she encouraged me. We arrived at Ebenezer Road and the hill seemed as steep as Everest as we climbed it. I groaned within and prayer came from the very depth of my heart and I told the dear Lord I was verily guilty of all my sins and justly deserved His wrath against me, but O could He have mercy upon me? I took my seat, but did not feel able to join in the hymns, and the reading from God's Word seemed only to increase my condemnation. When Mr. Sawyer spoke in prayer he seemed to be praying for everyone in the chapel except me and I sank lower and lower. Then Satan came in like a flood and said, "You know only too well that you are a condemned sinner and there can be no hope of mercy for you." How I restrained myself from running out of the chapel I know not. Then dear Mr. Sawyer gave out his text: "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench" (Isa. 42. 3). O, I thought, this is for me, and how I listened, but to no avail. I was quite outside the text and felt I was completely and utterly condemned and tears flowed from a truly broken heart.

A ray of hope

Then the most wonderful thing happened. Mr. Sawyer came to the end of his sermon, closed the Bible and said, "There may be a poor sinner here tonight who feels that they have sinned beyond all hope of mercy. Let me tell you, poor soul, if God has made you aware of your sins it is not His purpose to destroy you. He may and certainly will bruise you, but He will spare you, so hope on, poor soul; the time will come when you shall clearly see, not only that He shed His

blood, but you shall say, 'For me.'" A little ray of indescribable hope was raised up in my poor heart and like Bunyan's pilgrim the load slipped from off my back and I could look up once more. I thanked God for His great goodness and mercy to me, an undeserving sinner, and that sweet hope has never left me, although it is oftentimes sorely tried. I told my dear one what had transpired and she said, "I have prayed for this for so long," and we rejoiced together at the goodness of the Lord.

But now I had an aching void and I longed to have it sealed upon my heart like the dear psalmist when he said, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation" (Psa 35. 3). I had to wait for that for a long season. Like the hymnwriter, I proved that,

"Thus far my God has led me on,
And made His truth and mercy known;
My hopes and fears alternate rise,
And comforts mingle with my sighs."

Hope sealed

The longed-for day came in August 1982. I had been especially favoured on the Sabbath under the ministry of Mr. Ernest Moore who spoke from, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psa. 51. 10). The sweetness remained with me.

The following day I set out to pick a few blackberries. It was a beautiful autumn morning and so quiet and peaceful. As I began to pick the fruit, I thought how wonderful this fruit appears without the help of man, and enlargement of heart was given me. I began to think of how God had watched over and preserved me from all harm and danger both in peace and in war, of how He had made a way for me in providence when there was no way, and how He had blessed me with a dear wife and family. Above all He had raised up a sweet hope in my poor, undeserving heart. I was so overcome that I sank to my knees and prayer and thanksgiving flowed freely from my heart. I asked the dear Lord to forgive all my sins and lead and guide me the remaining days of my journey and bring me at last to be with Him and that He would watch over my loved ones and have mercy upon them.

Forgiveness and renewal of strength

As I kneeled there, an indescribable stillness surrounded me and then this entered into my poor heart: "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us" (Psa. 103. 12). How long I kneeled there I know not, but when I got up, I proved the truth of another scripture that, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isa. 40. 31). And so it was that angina and aches and pains were forgotten and I strode up in the company of dear Anne Steele and I sang as I had never sung before, "To our Redeemer's glorious name" (Gadsby's 418). This was indeed a day of days and never to be forgotten. "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name" (Psa. 103. 1).

Exercised concerning baptism

But now the solemn ordinance of believers' baptism was with me. I used to feel sadness of heart when my dear wife and daughter sat down at the Lord's table and I felt quite unable to join with them. I can truthfully say that I did not

feel to be disobedient, but I had such a view of my wretched state, that I had absolutely no confidence in the flesh.

On January 10th, 1988 Mr. E. Moore was with us and during the interval of service, he came to me and gave me the hymn 1056 for the Ordinance, as I used to start the singing, and he feelingly said, "This hymn so often takes me in." I read it through and when the dear man gave it out, he was quite broken and he had a companion in me. When I tried to pitch, I hardly knew how to sing it, such was its effect on me. This solemn matter lay upon my spirit day and night and caused much prayer and searching of heart.

The following Lord's day we had a complete stranger to us, Mr. P. Warren. He was so led into my pathway, that he seemed to know all about me and said during his discourse, "If the Lord has laid a solemn exercise in your heart, it will be with you until it is accomplished." This settled the matter for me and when I told my dear one, she said immediately, "Just you get on the phone to Bob (our deacon) and ask him to call a church meeting." This was duly arranged for January 19th, 1988.

Baptism

I was enabled to tell the church of my experience, which was accepted, and arrangements made for my baptism on January 29th, 1988. As our baptistery was out of order, Mr. Seth Mercer kindly arranged for it to be accomplished, by kind permission, at Grove Road, Eastbourne.

On January 24th, we had another complete stranger with us, and remarkably the text was, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul" (Psa. 66. 16). This was a confirming word to me and an encouragement to Mr. Richard Wells, the Lord's servant.

So on January 29th, the text was Psalm 110. 3: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power," and I was baptized by Mr. Seth Mercer, a day to be truly remembered with thankfulness.

Received into membership

I was received into the church at Bethel, Robertsbridge, by Mr. Charles Beadle on February 7th and the word given to me was from Paul's second Epistle to Timothy, 3. 14: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." I feel I can truly sing with dear Medley in hymn 410:

"O for a heart prepared to sing,
To God, my Saviour and my King;
While with His saints I join to tell,
My Jesus has done all things well."

Amen.

Here Mr. Lewis's writings end.

Some time before he died, in speaking to Mr. Robert Field, Mr. Lewis said, "Mr. Field, there are two things I feel I can say. One is, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9. 25); and, "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (2 Tim. 1. 12).

The following are a few notes of visits to Mr. Lewis during his last days:

Lord's day, January 9th, 2005: Again asked me to take his funeral. The Lord was with us. I read Isaiah 43. 1-7

Lord's day, January, 16th: I read Revelation 7. 9-17, in which he joined.

Lord's day, January, 23rd: I read Isaiah 43. 1-7, to which he responded. A pleasure to be with him.

Friday, January 28th: I read Psalms 23 and 116. He only wanted to talk about better things, his feelings in hymn 386 verse 1: "Weary of earth, myself and sin."

Thursday, February 10th: His language: "For heaven alone my heart prepare, and have my conversation there." He spoke of hymn 418: "To our Redeemer's glorious name."

Saturday, February 28th: I read Revelation 22. 1-7 and 16-21. Waiting for the Lord to come.

Saturday, March 5th: I read Psalm 41. 1-3 and 2 Corinthians 4. 17, 18 and 5.1; also hymn 707 on "Our light affliction," to which he said, "That's me."

Following the closure of Bethel Chapel, Robertsbridge, Mr. Lewis attended The Dicker Chapel, where he was much loved and set a truly gracious example. The funeral was held there, with Mr. R.D.G. Field opening the service with a hymn, prayer and reading from Psalm 24 and 2 Kings 2. 1-15, followed by a few remarks about Mr. Lewis. I then continued, reading his testimony and speaking of the privilege it was to visit him in hospital, when he only wanted to speak of better things, waiting for the Lord to come and take him. Hymns 410 and 418 were sung.

S.M.

HITHERTO

"Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" (1 Sam. 7. 12)

When our soul is much discouraged
By the roughness of the way,
And the cross we have to carry
Seemeth heavier every day,
When some cloud that overshadows
Hides our Father's face from view;
O! It's well then to remember
He has blessed us hitherto.

Looking back the long years over,
What a varied path! And yet,
All the way His hand has led us,
Placed each hindrance we have met;
Given to us the pleasant places,
Cheered us all the journey through;
Passing through the deepest waters,
He has blessed us hitherto.

L. Oakley

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
AUGUST 2005

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

THURSDAY, JULY 7TH, 2005

July 7th was a terrible day for London, and for us all – the day the dreadful terrorist attack took place, leaving over fifty dead and many wounded. May we hear the voice of God in this. Surely He is speaking? Evil seems to have abounded in recent days, and sin always brings sorrow, sooner or later. We view the terrible events as God’s judgment on our nation. True, this was the work of evil men, but God in His mysterious sovereignty often uses the wicked as a scourge. The Bible clearly teaches this, especially the minor prophets. “God’s judgments are abroad in the earth”; may the people “learn righteousness” (Isa. 26. 9).

The previous day had been a day of gladness and rejoicing in London. Why? Because London had been awarded the Olympics, to be held there in 2012. Our country is sport-mad; sport has become an idol. There appeared to be as much rejoicing that day in London as there was when the War ended in 1945, and which was being remembered that same week.

One word was heard over and over again the day before the terrorist attack: “2012.” It seemed to be on everyone’s lips – “2012.” But who said there will *be* a 2012? The future is in the Lord’s hands. What if He returns to judge the world *before* 2012? What if the dreadful explosions of July 7th had been the end of the world? May the Lord’s voice to us be heard: “Be ye also ready: for in such an hour *as ye think not*, the Son of Man cometh.” In many ways the day started as any other Thursday: people travelling to work, people about their normal business. But there were those who left home that morning who will never return. What changes there can be in a moment!

Our feelings must be of the deepest sorrow and compassion for the bereaved and for those who are injured. We would pray for them as enabled. God’s people are not to be detached or aloof.

As we consider the unknown way, we know not what lies before us. The hearts of many are filled with apprehension. Will there be further attacks? Will God’s judgments be displayed in other ways? The psalmist made a remarkable statement: “Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea” (Psa. 46. 2). Here is calamity indeed! What worse disaster than the earth itself being removed, or the very mountains being

flung from their places? But even if this, the worst of disasters, should take place, the psalmist says, "We will not fear." And he precedes it with a "therefore."

It has been remarked that the psalmists often use this word "therefore." It is a word that comes continually in the Psalms, the point being – if the psalmist makes a statement, he gives a reason for it. "Therefore." What is the reason here? the *therefore*? Because "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (verse 1). There are many reasons for us to fear: what *has* happened; what *may* happen; what we know *will* happen (troubles, difficulties, bereavements, death – and then the judgment). There is only one reason why we should *not* fear: "God is our refuge."

In a day when many judgments are abroad in the earth the Lord speaks a wonderful word: "Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast" (Isa. 26. 20). These "chambers of refuge" for God's people are in God Himself. "*God* is our refuge and strength" – God in His mercy, His compassion, His everlasting love, His faithfulness, His power to protect and to deliver. "God is our refuge." And then there are so many things bound up with our God which are so many chambers of refuge: the Word of God ("Still in Thy unchanging Word a beam of comfort shines"); the promises; the throne of grace; God's overruling providence – He is in control.

Above all, when we think of "the chambers of refuge," we think of the precious blood of Christ, and we are reminded of the solemn Passover night. What a chamber of refuge was a house sprinkled with the blood! The destroying angel passed through the land. There was death in the house of each Egyptian. But the lamb was slain, the blood shed, and then the blood sprinkled on each Israelitish house, and, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the curse shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." There was safety beneath the blood.

When disaster strikes a country, city or town, this does not mean that God's people are exempt from the effects of the disaster. At the time of the Great Plague (1665) and the Great Fire (1666) many of God's people died or lost their homes and loved ones. But the Puritans preached clearly on this point. Nothing could touch them without divine permission; if it did, it was for God's glory and their real good; and if they were sheltering beneath the blood of Christ, they were safe eternally.

July 7th was a terrible day, but the Second Coming will be a much more terrible day. Our great need is to be ready, to be prepared.

"In that dread moment, O to hide
Beneath His sheltering blood!"

Having a saving interest in Christ, God's people can say even of that terrible day: "Therefore will not we fear, though the earth (*literally*) be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." How precious to have a good hope through grace in that day!

"Then let the wildest storms arise,
Let tempests mingle earth and skies;
No fatal shipwreck should I fear,
But all my treasure with me bear."

AARON'S ROD THAT BUDED

*Sermon preached by J. Saunders, Rector of St. Ann's,
Blackfriars, London, on October 7th, 1827*

Text: "And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds" (Num. 17. 8).

The foregoing chapter reveals the account of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, and others, against those of the tribe of Levi whom God had especially chosen for the priesthood; and because God of His own will had nominated Aaron and his sons to this peculiar office, they were accused of haughtiness and presumption. "Ye take too much upon you," said their accusers; in which act of rebellion we trace the natural opposition there is in the human mind to the exercise of God's sovereignty, and the strong disposition to dispute the propriety of His commands. The chapter then goes on to show how the offended Majesty of heaven avenged His own cause by visiting the conspirators with His heavy judgments. "The ground," it is said, "clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation."

Again it is said, "There came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense." And again, "All the ... children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord," for which we find in the forty-ninth verse that 14,700 fell before the ravages of that dreadful disorder, the plague, and were thus awfully summonsed into the presence of God to render an account of their transgressions against Him. Here, as I before observed, we see their true opposition to God's

sovereignty in their stubborn disobedience to His will, and the whole may serve as a just and awful portrait of what we all are by nature.

We may further notice that this Aaron, who had been rejected and scornfully treated, was the man appointed to stand in the gap between them and an offended God. "Aaron ... ran into the midst of the congregation," when the plague had begun, "and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people." And herein we see something of the character of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Friend of sinners and the Prince of His people. The conduct of Aaron, at the command of Moses, taking a censer, putting incense thereon, and *running* between the dead and the living, or standing between them, and presenting his incense unto God, whereby the plague was stayed, O how does it point out to us what his great Antitype is, and what He has done to arrest the plague of sin!

The following chapter opens this fully: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod according to the house of their fathers, of all their princes according to the house of their fathers twelve rods; write thou every man's name upon his rod. And thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi: for one rod shall be for the head of the house of their fathers. And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you. And it shall come to pass that the man's rod whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from Me the murmurings of the children of Israel whereby they murmur against you. And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, and every one of their princes gave him a rod apiece, for each prince one, according to their fathers' houses, even twelve rods: and the rod of Aaron was among their rods. And Moses laid up the rods before the Lord in the tabernacle of witness. And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds. And Moses brought out all the rods from before the Lord unto all the children of Israel: and they looked, and took every man his rod. And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from Me, that they die not" (chap. 17. 1-10).

The budding of the rod of Aaron is the subject of my discourse this day, and O may the God of Aaron, the God of Moses, and the God of the whole house of Israel, be with us to bless us, so that while we speak of these great things to the outward ear, He may speak to the soul, fill us with good things, and send us not empty away.

We may learn some important instruction then from the words of my text this morning, if we take them in connection with the whole context.

In the first place we would consider the test which God gives of the man whom He had appointed to be priest over His people. We read that the name of each tribe was written upon the rod belonging to the head of the respective tribes of Israel, and that these rods were to be laid up in the tabernacle, and said the Lord, "It shall come to pass that the man's rod whom I shall choose shall blossom," and so we find that in the morning Aaron's rod was the only one that budded and blossomed, and that all the other rods of all the tribes of Israel remained as they were; that is they were altogether unfruitful.

In the next place we learn an important lesson from the fruitfulness of Aaron's rod in regard to the mysteries of the gospel.

And then *thirdly* we learn a further lesson from the use that was made of this rod after it had budded and blossomed. It was to be laid up in the ark of the testimony as a standing proof that Aaron was the man whom God had chosen to be the priest of His people, and thus to prevent their murmuring on a future occasion.

I. *In the first place*, then, we are to speak of the unfruitfulness of the rods of all the other tribes of Israel. It is of very little moment for us to enquire what the nature of those rods was, or whether they were all taken from the almond tree or not; it is sufficient to know that they were *dead*. They had been cut down from the tree on which they grew, and consequently they could not bud, blossom and yield almonds as the rod of Aaron did without a special miracle being performed. Now do we not see in these dead rods a true picture of the spiritual state of all the tribes of Israel, and of what we all are by nature universally in the sight of God? – dead in trespasses and sin.

Every man by nature fancies that he has a claim to the divine favour, or that he can come to God in his own name, which is a fatal error, and whosoever does not through grace overcome it, will find it a stumbling-block over which he will fall, and sink into everlasting perdition. Such persons do not know Christ, and that Christ is the only way to God; hence they look to their own dead rod and their own broken staff, their own dead soul that has been cut off by reason of sin from Christ, the living Vine; not knowing that having lost all right and title to divine favour, and consequently all power by which they could draw nigh unto God, they stand in need of some other qualifications, some other way, some other name, through which they may approach the Majesty of heaven. Depend upon it, whatever be the pride of our hearts, he that in this manner exalteth human nature, which is dead in trespasses and sin, shall be brought low; and living and dying in this spiritually dead and dying state, he must bid farewell to all hope of fruitfulness to all eternity. Christ says, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." You must

approach God therefore through Him who is “the Way, the Truth and the Life.”

As these rods were dead, so observe they were destitute of all fruitfulness till the rod of Aaron budded, and bloomed, and bore almonds. Now Moses in this had imposed no cheat upon the senses of the people of Israel, either by going into the garden and gathering a branch of the almond tree on which the almonds were growing, or by any other means, but it was altogether a miracle.

There is no meetness in the natural man for communion with God; he can have no fellowship with his Maker; he is without reconciliation, and consequently in this dead state he is without fruitfulness. “Can two walk together,” says the prophet, “except they be agreed?” Man has by nature none of those excellencies of character which assimilate him to God. In the twenty-fourth Psalm it is said, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.” Now no man by nature hath a pure heart or clean hands, and therefore has no meetness whereby he can draw nigh unto God. He may say, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing”; but he knows not that he is poor, and wretched, and blind, and miserable, and naked. My dear friends, you and I can never approach the footstool of God, and enjoy the smiles of Him that sitteth upon the throne of His glory, unless we bear fruit unto God, unless we have a righteousness put on by the Spirit of God; for as the Scriptures say, “We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isa. 64. 6). We are all by nature as truly dead as the rods of the eleven tribes, nor can we ever bud, and blossom, and bear fruit but by the power of God.

Who can conceive the intense interest felt by the princes of the respective tribes, whilst they watched through the long and anxious night, when their rods were laid up in the tabernacle, waiting for God’s decision as to whom He shall choose to silence the murmuring children of Israel?

They might not indeed fully have understood the nature and design of the circumstance, and therefore even the tribe of Levi, the family of Aaron, were under the same anxiety; they might have imagined that God was about to make some other arrangement, or give the glory of the priesthood to some other of the tribes of Israel, and consequently waited with the rest in anxious suspense for the approach of the morning, when God should make known His will. And moreover, when the princes of the eleven tribes saw all the rods barren except Aaron’s, when they perceived that his rod alone budded, and blossomed, and bore almonds, they might have apprehended that they were not only rejected from the

priesthood, but also from the favour of God altogether. What horror then must have thrilled through their souls, and well might they be led to exclaim, "Behold we die! we perish! we all perish! Whosoever cometh anything near unto the tabernacle of the Lord shall die; shall we be consumed with dying?" or, we *shall* be consumed with dying! They did not understand that though *they* were rejected from the priesthood, God had nevertheless chosen *one* from amongst them to be a priest unto Himself, and that through that one they were all to be accepted. In this we learn that grand truth, that we can never be accepted by God on the ground of our own righteousness, but from the righteousness of Christ alone.

II. Here are pointed out to us some of the mysteries of the gospel, which are now *secondly* our object to consider, and O that we may behold these to our soul's comfort and lasting benefit! My text says, "Behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds." Aaron's rod, we perceive, did not remain dead like those belonging to the eleven tribes; God had imparted to it a principle of life, which caused it to bud, and blossom, and bear fruit. Now this rod was to represent Aaron himself, whose name was written upon it.

Aaron was the representative of Levi, and Levi was the representative of all the tribes of Israel; this rod therefore was not only to represent Aaron, but through him all the children of Israel. The meaning of the name of Levi is, *the joined ones*, according to Genesis 29. 34. The office of the priest was to stand between God and man, and join the two together. Thus the Israelites brought their offerings to the priest, and the priest was to present them, by which means God and man did meet together in *the priest*, who by this act prefigured and represented our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

So we find in the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, He is spoken of under this very figure: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears: but with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins." And then in the sixth verse we find the effects of His work, or of His ministry: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and

the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

The rod of which my text speaks represented Aaron, as before observed, whom the Lord had chosen to be the priest of His people, but it was designed to point out a greater and far more glorious Person than Aaron, namely, the Branch that was to grow out of the stem of Jesse, which in the sight of the world was without form, or comeliness, or beauty, but which in reality was the fruitful Tree of Life, bearing the richest fruits; excellent and comely in the eyes of a lost and ruined sinner. O how ought this to influence our minds to turn away from the rotten and dead rods of human nature, and turn our eyes to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who Himself says, "As the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself," that He might give eternal life to as many as God has given Him (John 5. 26, 17. 2). Aaron after the long night, during which he had participated in the anxiety that had torn the minds of the heads of the tribes of Israel, looked forward in the morning no doubt to Him whom his fruitful rod did represent, and so should we turn away from the view of our own dead rods, our own poor, ruined nature, and seeing that we cannot make this otherwise than it is by our own power, we must leave it in despair. But though we can claim nothing on the ground of our own merit, we can find pardon, and we can stand accepted in our Lord Jesus Christ, and to Him we can look as budding, blossoming and bearing fruit. He is the green fir tree from whom our fruit is found, and being accepted in Him, and He being the fountain of life eternal, by faith His people receive all from Him.

If we wish to bud, and blossom, and bring forth fruit, we must be willing to be stripped of everything, to renounce all our righteousness, as well as our sin, and to be saved wholly by God's free grace, through faith, and this not of ourselves, for it is the gift of God.

The rod of Aaron not only budded, it had not only leaves and blossoms, but it produced fruit. The almond tree is a very lively and beautiful emblem of the character of Christ in His priestly office. It is said to be the first that buds and blossoms in the spring, and retains its verdure to the latest part of autumn. The Lord Jesus Christ *ever lives* to make intercession; He bears His blossom and His fruitfulness with eternal vigour. He blossomed in the earliest spring of the world when it was said to our desponding first parents, the seed of the woman "shall bruise the serpent's head." Tidings were brought from heaven from time to time that He would appear in the flesh, and the Old Testament saints looked and waited for the event, crying out in holy ejaculations, "Why is His chariot so long in coming?" And in the fulness of time, when He entered upon His covenant-work, He budded and blossomed as it were afresh. The buds, blossoms and the fruit appeared to us with renewed

beauty, so that to the eye of faith He is no longer beheld as a root out of a dry ground, for we have seen with our eyes, and we have looked upon, and our hands have handled the Word of life. He was recognised by Simeon as the blooming almond tree almost as soon as He came into the world: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace ... for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."

His whole life was an exercise of undeviating, perfect obedience to all the will and commands of God, and in this was the literal budding and blossoming of the true almond tree. He even withheld not His life for the sake of His people, but when His blood was required He gave it for them freely, that by it He might blot out the handwriting that was against them. And truly, "Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7. 26). It is very blessed to see how in all the circumstances of His life our Lord Jesus Christ budded, and blossomed, and yielded fruit unto God. And more especially did He blossom in His death, and being risen, and ascended up into heaven, the whole earth is filled as it were with the tidings of His glorious accomplishment of the great work assigned Him; so that from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, the fruits of this almond tree appear in the sight of a ruined, rebellious and benighted world.

Moreover this rod of the almond tree was commanded to be laid up in the ark of the testimony, and so we find Paul when enumerating the things that were preserved in the ark included it amongst them. That ark was the sacred depository of the two tables of the law, "the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded" (Heb. 9. 4). That ark I need scarcely remind you was a type of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the golden pot with manna also prefigured Him as the bread of eternal life, and the rod of Aaron might represent Him as ever fruitful and eternally flourishing.

In Revelation 11. 19, it is said, "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament," which assures our minds that our Lord and Saviour is still the High Priest whom God appointed: that through Him sinners might draw nigh unto God with acceptance; for Christ ever liveth as our Covenant-head, budding, blossoming, and bearing the fruit of life, being Himself the sum and substance of the everlasting covenant; watching over all the interests of His church, making continual intercession for His people, engaged to bring them safely through all the storms and vicissitudes of life, and to raise them up to be with Him at the last day. The fruits of this almond tree therefore are enough to satisfy the desires of all His people. They are full of instruction, encouragement and consolation, and every poor sinner whose heart the Lord has opened to enquire the way of salvation, we must direct to Christ as the only Way, the Truth, and the Life.

III. *In the last place* we perceive the reason why this rod was laid up in the ark of the testimony: it was to be a token that Aaron was the man whom God had chosen to be the priest of His people. It was to be kept as a perpetual memorial of this, like the bow in the cloud in the days of rain, which should always remind us that the world will never again be destroyed by a deluge of waters, and from this the Christian raises his view from the literal to the spiritual covenant. “For as I have sworn,” saith the Lord, “that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee” (Isa. 54. 9).

The use therefore that is to be made of this rod of Aaron is to teach us this most important truth, that our Lord Jesus Christ is ever living, budding and blossoming in the kingdom of heaven. He is there as the ark of the testimony, and as a token before God to remind Him as it were of His own engagements. Thus His work and undertaking are continually blooming afresh, by which means God is, if I may so speak, held to His promises, and the poor sinner who approaches Him with brokenness and contrition of heart cannot be sent away empty.

The rod of the almond tree was also laid up in the ark as a testimony against the rebels, in order that no one should ever after venture to set up his own pretensions in opposition to the ordinance of God; and so let no one presume to set up his own barrenness in opposition to Christ’s fruitfulness, nor seek to be accepted of God in his own name or for his own worth, in opposition to the righteousness and worthiness of the Lord Jesus Christ. If therefore a rebel should be here who resists the doctrine of the gospel, I beseech him to remember that the rod of the almond tree is a standing witness against him.

This rod moreover was placed in the ark to take away all murmuring from the people, and O that this consideration may take away all murmuring from the people of God of the present day against His gospel and the dispensations of His grace and providence. Nothing, my dear friends, can effect this but the view of Christ as the blooming almond tree. Asaph felt this when he was envious at the prosperity of the wicked, but after he went into the sanctuary of God, “Then understood I,” said he, “their end.” When he went where the ark was and saw the rod of Aaron, then all the mystery was unravelled. Let us then seek by faith to look into the ark, so that all our doubts, fears and murmurings may be dissipated.

Thanks be to God this rod of the almond tree is ever fruitful and ever satisfying. Not so are the things of time; if you seek happiness in them you will be disappointed – riches make to themselves wings, and fly away; and indeed the whole earth is to be consumed, and utterly destroyed. But remember this fruit-bearing rod, the Lord Jesus Christ,

is beyond the reach of all this. If you sustain losses, you will find Christ to be your greatest gain; you will be thankful even in adversity under His afflicting hand if you live upon the fruits of this rod, and you will not be much elevated if surrounded with earthly prosperity. You will rather indeed be as a man having his feet upon the earth while his head is in heaven.

Jesus Christ is the Tree of Life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, which yieldeth its fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of nations (Rev. 22. 2).

We do not know who this "J. Saunders" was, but in the nineteenth century there were many godly clergymen, whose names are not known today, who clearly preached the doctrines of free and sovereign grace.

WAKING FROM SLEEP

A morning reading by James Bourne

January 13th, 1841. Zech. 2. 13: "Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for He is raised up out of His holy habitation." This is to teach us the majesty of God in His church. The prophet says, verse 1, "I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand." Now when God sets this line to our consciences, do not let us repine or murmur or say, "I did this which I ought not, or did not do that, or was faulty there"; but say, "Heal my soul, O Lord; for I have sinned against Thee."

I saw a person yesterday who has spiritual life enough to know that this line is on her conscience, but yet not life enough to seek the Lord with the needful spiritual energy. Such are more able to bear their trouble and misery than to get out of it. It is so much trouble to get out; because they are half asleep. Now God will wake such who are His, and teach them to cry in good earnest, "Heal my soul, O Lord; for I have sinned against Thee." For this trouble for sin shall drive them to Christ or to despair. God shall stretch out His hand, and nothing shall stand before it but the real work of the Spirit.

How is it that there are some of you who do not lay to heart and consider what this work is, but are much at ease, and suffer your mind to be filled with many vain things, but you do not cry hard, and not rest without this healing? God says He will "search Jerusalem with candles." These candles are the Spirit of the Lord, who searches the innermost parts; and He will punish them who are "settled on their lees"; that is, who are in this sleepy posture. For they belong to God, and they understand for a moment when you speak, and get a glimpse of the truth;

they assent, and say you are right; but then they fall asleep again, and the next time you see them, you find them in the same place. Now God will come and awaken such. "He is raised up out of His holy habitation."

And it shall come to pass "*in that day*" – this day is when the Lord applies the atonement with power to our consciences. No idol can stand before that. In that day all complaints will be removed. "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her." Where this work is, we shall not watch here and take care there, but look to Christ with a single eye, and trust in Him, who will be a wall all around us of defence on all our measures. And we shall be very tender in all our walk, to see that we do not grieve the Holy Spirit.

THE TRUE VINE

By J.C. Ryle

"I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the Vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15. 1-6).

These verses, we must carefully remember, contain a parable. In interpreting it we must not forget the great rule which applies to all Christ's parables. The general lesson of each parable is the main thing to be noticed. The minor details must not be tortured and pressed to an excess, in order to extract a meaning from them. The mistakes into which Christians have fallen by neglecting this rule are neither few nor small.

We are meant to learn first, from these verses, that *the union between Christ and believers is very close*. He is "the Vine," and they are "the branches."

The union between the branch of a vine and the main stem is the closest that can be conceived. It is the whole secret of the branch's life, strength, vigour, beauty and fertility. Separate from the parent stem, it has no life of its own. The sap and juice that flow from the stem are the origin and maintaining power of all its leaves, buds, blossoms and fruit. Cut off from the stem, it must soon wither and die.

The union between Christ and believers is just as close, and just as real. In themselves believers have no life, or strength, or spiritual power.

All that they have of vital religion comes from Christ. They are what they are, and feel what they feel, and do what they do, because they draw out of Jesus a continual supply of grace, help and ability. Joined to the Lord by faith, and united in mysterious union with Him by the Spirit, they stand, and walk, and continue, and run the Christian race. But every jot of good about them is drawn from their spiritual Head, Jesus Christ.

The thought before us is both comfortable and instructive. Believers have no cause to despair of their own salvation, and to think they will never reach heaven. Let them consider that they are not left to themselves and their own strength. Their root is Christ, and all that there is in the root is for the benefit of the branches. Because He lives, they shall live also. Worldly people have no cause to wonder at the continuance and perseverance of believers. Weak as they are in themselves, their Root is in heaven, and never dies. "When I am weak," said Paul, "then am I strong" (2 Cor. 12. 10).

We are meant to learn, secondly, from these verses that *there are false Christians as well as true ones*. There are branches in the vine which appear to be joined to the parent stem, and yet bear no fruit. There are men and women who appear to be members of Christ, and yet will prove finally to have had no vital union with Him.

There are myriads of professing Christians in every church whose union with Christ is only outward and formal. Some of them are joined to Christ by baptism and church membership. Some of them go even further than this, and are regular communicants and loud talkers about religion. But they all lack the one thing needful. Notwithstanding services, and sermons, and sacraments, they have no grace in their hearts, no faith, no inward work of the Holy Spirit. They are not one with Christ, and Christ in them. Their union with Him is only nominal, and not real. They have "a name to live," but in the sight of God they are dead.

Christians of this stamp are aptly represented by branches in a vine which bear no fruit. Useless and unsightly, such branches are only fit to be cut off and burned. They draw nothing out of the parent stem, and make no return for the place they occupy. Just so will it be at the last day with false professors and nominal Christians. Their end, except they repent, will be destruction. They will be separated from the company of true believers, and cast out as withered, useless branches, into everlasting fire. They will find at last, whatever they thought in this world, that there is a worm that never dies, and a fire that is not quenched.

We are meant to learn, thirdly, from these verses, that the *fruits of the Spirit are the only satisfactory evidence of a man being a true Christian*. The disciple that abides in Christ, like a branch abiding in the vine, will always bear fruit.

He that would know what the word “fruit” means need not wait long for an answer. Repentance toward God, faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, holiness of life and conduct, these are what the New Testament calls “fruit.” These are the distinguishing marks of the man who is a living branch of the true Vine. Where these things are wanting, it is vain to talk of possessing dormant grace and spiritual life. Where there is no fruit there is no life. He that lacketh these things is dead while he liveth.

True grace, we must not forget, is never idle. It never slumbers and never sleeps. It is a vain notion to suppose that we are living members of Christ, if the example of Christ is the only satisfactory evidence of saving union between Christ and our souls. Where there is no fruit of the Spirit to be seen, there is no vital religion in the heart. The Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus will always make Himself known in the daily conduct of those in whom He dwells. The Master Himself declares, “Every tree is known by his own fruit” (Luke 6. 44).



THE BLOOD OF THE CROSS

By John Flavel (1628-1691)

There is sufficient efficacy in the blood of the cross to expiate and wash away the greatest sins. This is manifest, for it is *precious blood*, as it is called: “Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1. 18, 19).

This preciousness of the blood of Christ riseth from the union it hath with that Person, who is over all, God blessed for ever. And on that account is styled the blood of God (Acts 20. 28); and so it becomes royal, princely blood. Yea, such for the dignity and efficacy of it as never was created, or shall ever run in any other veins but His. The blood of all the creatures in the world, even a sea of human blood, bears no more proportion to the precious and excellent blood of Christ than a dish of common water to a river of liquid gold.

On the account of its invaluable preciousness, it becomes satisfying and reconciling blood to God. So the apostle speaks: “And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Col. 1. 20).

The same blood which is *redemption* to them that dwell on earth is *confirmation* to them that dwell in heaven. Before the efficacy of this blood, guilt vanishes and shrinks away as the shadow before the glorious sun. Every drop of it hath a voice, and speaks to the soul that sits trembling under its guilt better things than the blood of Abel (Heb.

12. 24). It sprinkles us from all evil, i.e. an unquiet and accusing conscience (Heb. 10. 22). For having enough in it to satisfy God, it must needs have enough in it to satisfy conscience.

Conscience can demand no more for its satisfaction, nor will it take less than God demands for His satisfaction. And in this blood is enough to give both satisfaction.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH TROUSERS FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN?

By C. Sonneveld

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I have a question about wearing trousers. Deuteronomy 22. 5 says: "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment." Does that mean that girls and women should not wear trousers? In the same chapter you can read that it is wrong to "sow thy vineyard with divers seeds" (verse 9), or to "plow with an ox and an ass together" (verse 10), or to "wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together" (verse 11). Why do we focus on that one commandment of verse 5 and do not care about the other rules in the same chapter? Or should we also stop wearing clothes made of synthetic material? I would be glad if you are willing to say something about this in our catechism class next week.

Well, I promised to do that. The result was an interesting discussion. However, we ran out of time, and that was a pity. I announced that I would try to come back to the topic. This article is one way to make good on that promise.

To answer the question mentioned above we should go step by step. If I see it well, we need to address three different questions:

1. How should we look at the laws of the Old Testament?
2. What does the Lord mean by those rules against mixing up diverse crops, animals and materials? and,
3. What sorts of clothes should men and women wear?

A Schoolmaster

Besides the ten commandments, the people of Israel received all kinds of laws from the Lord. Why? The Lord intended to bring them up and instruct them in the first principles of serving Him, but Israel was yet a child. How is it with a child? He needs clear rules and a firm but

loving hand. His character has to be formed. Obedience has to be learned. That is why he needs rules. And that is why the Lord gave all kinds of laws in the time of the Old Testament: ceremonial laws and civil laws. In Galatians 4 Paul calls these rules “tutors and governors” (literally: pedagogues; that means teachers or educators). Israel was, as it were, a pre-school child, living in the midst of heathen nations. The ceremonial and civil laws functioned as a schoolmaster. They helped Israel to learn the spiritual ABCs.

There is another thing. For a child it is still quite difficult to think in abstract terms and concepts. Instruction has to be on a more simple level. That is the reason that teachers use visual aids in kindergarten. A child learns counting with the help of pictures: one balloon plus one balloon equals two balloons. Thus the Lord gave ceremonial laws and figures. The temple service was full of symbols. In the house of God at Jerusalem one could see much more than in our churches today. The things which are proclaimed to us by the Word were portrayed in “pictures” or figures during the time of the Old Testament. With the coming of the Lord Jesus, this has changed. The Son of God has been revealed, and the schoolmaster has made way for Him. The church is no longer under tutors and governors but has grown into adulthood. Do adults still count with the help of pictures? No, they use numbers. But even though the pictures fall away, one plus one remains two!

That is why we read in Article 25 of our Belgic Confession of Faith that “the ceremonies and figures of the law ceased at the coming of Christ and that all the shadows are accomplished.” We do not want to go back to those shadows any more. We should not reintroduce “pictures” into our church life. “Yet the truth and substance of them remain with us in Jesus Christ, in whom they have their completion.” Therefore we do not tear any pages out of our Bible. We do not skip the chapters containing the ceremonial laws, but we read them in the light of the New Testament. Just think of the temple worship, with its sacrifices, washings, feasts, etc. How instructive is all this! Israel has not learned vain things. In a visual way they were instructed in the truth of original sin, the offering of Christ, atonement by Him, newness of life, and so on.

Do not mix things up!

We come to the second question. What should we think about those other laws, for instance, those forbidding the Israelites to mix two types of material in clothing, to sow two kinds of seed in one field, or to place two different animals before a plough? Why were such rules imposed on Israel? Well, in our early years we have to learn certain things in a sensitive way. An example of this is the time you have to come home. Your parents set the time: at such an hour you have to be in. If you do

not comply, you will be punished. Sometimes you feel this is far-fetched. But your parents may have wise intentions with what they say. Why do they set those rules? They think of your own well-being, and they think of the well-being of the whole family. There must be law and order. You are not alone in this world. You have to be considerate of others as well. That is what you have to learn while you are still young. That will help you for the rest of your life. When you are older, things become a little different. If I come home later than announced, I get no punishment from my wife. But through my upbringing I have learned (hopefully!) that in my coming and going I should also take the good of my family into account.

Now what was the Lord's intention with the laws we just heard about? What did He intend to bring across to Israel? That you should not mix up things which do not belong together! That you should not make a mess of your life! The heathen nations around Israel did not know the difference between profitable and unprofitable, between clean and unclean, between right and wrong, between God and the gods. They compromised; they synthesized; in other words, they mixed everything together. Israel was not allowed to do that. Therefore God gave them special rules. He told them what to eat and what not to eat; how to sow their field and how not to do that, etc. In the small things of life they had to learn how to act in the bigger issues of life. In a very simple way they learned a deeply spiritual lesson: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16. 13).

Once again, those special rules were aids. When one gets older, the aids can fall away, but the essence of what has been learned remains. We should not live without thinking. We have to make deliberate choices. We ought to live according to the principles of God's Word. There are things which please God and things which displease Him. There are things which are harmful and things which are beneficial for us. Do not mix them up! In that sense the laws which were meant for Israel can still teach us valuable things. Besides that, many of these laws were at the same time a blessing for the people, spiritually as well as physically. For example, Israel had to learn the distinction between clean (kosher) and unclean (non-kosher) food. Eating pork, for instance, was strictly forbidden. If we keep in mind that pigs in particular were animals that transmitted the most serious and contagious diseases in those days, it will become clear that God's commandment worked two ways! Indeed, "in keeping of them there is great reward" (Psa. 19. 11).

A pagan practice

Now the main question: What does the Bible say about women and girls wearing trousers? Does Deuteronomy 22. 5 mean that girls and women should not wear trousers?

Yes, that is what it means! Deuteronomy is a book which shows that Israel had to be different from the heathens who were living around them and among them. Israel's culture was permeated by pagan customs and idolatrous practices. Their temples, for instance, were places of immorality, places of so-called "holy prostitution." Men dressed as women, and women dressed as men. They did not know who was who because of this disguise. There was a mingling of sexes. Add to this the festive mood, the stirring music, and the use of alcohol, and the result was predictable. Everything went out of control. Such pagan feasts ended up in immorality, adultery, and even homosexuality. The distinction between males and females had disappeared.

In Deuteronomy 22. 5, Israel was strictly warned against this. And that warning applies to us as well. Or do we think that we can do without such a warning in this age of unisex? The equal rights movement is working hard to erase all differences between men and women. And from there it is only one step to so-called same-sex marriages.

Abomination

Someone says: "All right, but what makes us think that Deuteronomy 22. 5 is still applicable today? There are other laws in the same chapter which we no longer keep. You told us that they belong to the period of the Old Testament, the time in which Israel was still a child and had to be instructed by visual ceremonies and civil laws. Why, then, do we hold that men are still forbidden to wear female clothing and that women should not wear 'that which pertaineth to a man'?"

To that question I would like to answer two things. First of all, the Lord Himself makes it clear that this law is different from the others mentioned in Deuteronomy 22. When verse 5 forbids people to wear clothing of the opposite sex, the Holy Spirit adds, "For all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God." That is a very weighty expression! Abomination means something disgusting or loathsome. It refers to an evil which can fill us with horror. It denotes a sin which is in absolute contradiction to the holy essence of God. Such is the sin of mixing up the different sexes in regard to clothing.

Would that hold true merely for the time of the Old Testament? Or is it still binding for us today? God's essence does not change. That which was an abomination to Him yesterday is also an abomination today. A Bible concordance may help us to look up all the places that speak about abominable things. Leviticus 18. 22, for example, says, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination." There are more of these statements with the word "abomination" in the Old Testament. Now turn to the New Testament and try to find if any of these statements are renounced. You will seek in vain. If something is

an abomination in the sight of God, it remains an abomination. Deuteronomy is more than a civil law only for Israel.

God's order of creation

There is another reason why God's command concerning our clothing has a lasting value: it has to do with the way He has created us. In the very first chapter of the Bible, we can read that God created man male and female. He made Adam and Eve. In His wisdom He made two different sexes. Man and woman are different with respect to their physical appearance and their inner personality. They are created in view of each other. They are called to complement one another. So it has pleased God. This has nothing to do with a particular culture. It has to do with the ordinances of His creation. Neither is it annulled by the coming of Christ or by the work of His grace. In deliverance sin is destroyed, but not creation. The New Testament speaks about man's being the head of the woman (1 Cor. 11. 3). A woman is not inferior to a man, but she has received a different place, a different task, and different qualities. A father is the head of the family: guiding, commanding, protecting. A woman may be called the heart of the family: caring, feeding, cherishing.

Now what does Satan do? He attempts to overthrow the order of God's creation. He wants everything to be mixed up and in a state of confusion. And so he tries to turn two different sexes into one sex, a kind of unisex. He has been working on that already for many centuries. But especially after World War II this development has gone very fast; it is said that no difference ought to exist between males and females in the choice of a career, in the division of roles within the family, in hairstyle, in clothing. Textbooks and dictionaries are rewritten; we are no longer permitted to speak of "mankind" but should rather use the term "humankind"; a chairman has become a chairperson, a spokesman a spokesperson, and so on.

Is that something innocent? Is it just a matter of words and definitions? We all feel that there is something more to it. Here is a deliberate break with the past, a turning away from biblical values, a fundamental change which is going to have far-reaching consequences.

Colourless

As a result of unisex, men will no longer look like men, and women will no longer look like women. Men become effeminate, and women become mannish. Young men can be seen with long hair, with earrings and other ornaments, while young ladies appear with masculine haircuts and slacks. The colourful distinctions between male and female disappear. Everything becomes equal, grey and dull.

This is what the Bible warns against, not only in Deuteronomy 22, but on all its pages. The Creator has made both sexes with their own characteristics. That should come out clearly in our lives and clothing. In the ancient East, men and women did not wear exactly the same clothes we have today. But one could easily distinguish a man from a woman. That should also be the case today. Our culture is different, but the principles of God's Word are the same. A man ought to be dressed like a man, and a woman should appear as a woman. Therefore we say *NO* to trousers for girls and women!

Take a firm stand!

Perhaps someone may ask about work situations on the farm in which it is hard for a woman to wear a dress or skirt. What should we say about that? It is not easy to give an answer to each and every question. We have a heart which always wants to water down the principles of God's Word. Therefore let one thing be clear: if there are situations in which some people feel an exception would be justified, such exceptions should remain exceptions. A woman or girl who has worked on the farm will go home, take a shower, and dress like a lady again. If she lives according to God's Word, she will not go shopping, spend her leisure time, or attend college in trousers. She wants to be recognisable as a woman, a woman who lives under the truth.

Is this perhaps the reason that some of our girls and women do not act as may be expected of them? Are they afraid to be identified as belonging to that "strict, old-fashioned church where nothing is allowed"? Do they want to follow the styles and fashions of this world? Think about that. Yes, it will cost you a little self-denial to go against the trend of our society. It is easier to hide yourself. You may at times meet with a little scorn or open enmity. But it is better to stand alone and have the Lord with us than to be a friend of the world and have God against us. And at the end of the day, even non-Christians feel more respect for those who have a conviction and stand by it than for those who tamper with it. In other words, be consistent! The people who have no regard for God's Word live according to their own feelings, and they are not ashamed to speak out as they do. Should we, then, be so shy to stand for our own (God-given!) principles and act accordingly? Shame on us!

Then there is another point. We are glad that there are still quite a few families which seek, with all their shortcomings, to live according to what the Bible says about these issues. It is not always easy for those parents, but in love they try to bring their children up in this way. How painful it is for them when they must hear and see that parents belonging to the same church follow a different pattern and allow their children to dress as the world does! It undermines their authority. Besides that, it

is confusing to the outside world, and it breaks the power of our church community. Let it not be so among us. Take a firm stand and support each other. And pray above all for the fear of the Lord, because that fear causes us to depart from evil.

THROUGH MANY DANGERS

*The autobiography of Isaac Lewis (1823-1896), for over twenty years
pastor at Staplehurst, Kent
(Continued from page 225)*

But to return. The next voyage we made to Hartlepool I made diligent search for these people, and the dear Lord directed me aright. These poor, hidden ones met to worship in an upper room. It was late in the forenoon when I found them. Truly, as the man of God says, a day in the courts of the Lord's house is better than a thousand elsewhere. I soon felt at home with these few despised ones. After the service the leading man came and spoke friendly to me, and asked if I knew anything about these things. I said, "I hope I do." He asked me to come with them in the afternoon as they had a prayer meeting; I went and had a good time. The leading man said, "You must speak to the people this evening in the name of the Lord." I went on board my ship, and then my labour pains came on and I thought I would not go; but I had no rest in my spirit; so I felt, go I must.

When I reached the place the troubles of my heart were enlarged. I wanted a text, wisdom to open it, and a mouth to speak from it. The cry of my soul was up to the Lord to appear for me, which He did in a wonderful way. He gave me for a text Romans 5. 9. I did not know whether I should have five or five hundred words to speak. Truly God had given His poor worm the faith of trust, and I did believe God was able to supply all my needs out of the riches of His grace by Christ Jesus my Lord. And this He did to the wonder and surprise of His poor worm; and it was for no other cause than to show forth the praise of His glory, who first enabled me to trust in Christ. The people rejoiced and were glad. It was the first time I had ever opened my mouth in public.

Some may say, "Where is your call to the work of the ministry?" Well, I hope to be enabled to give some account, which will be spiritual; for if I, or any other man, speak contrary to the law and testimony, it is because there is no light in us. This law is no other than the law of faith, and the testimony of God's most holy Word. The Word being applied to the soul of every true servant of God by the Holy Ghost, in its strengthening, confirming, upholding and enabling powers, makes him a workman that needeth not to be ashamed of his work. I was sorely

tried, and exercised about the ministry for several years. I often feared it was only pride in me to desire such a thing. I wished to put it aside, and never again to think of it. But this I could not do. On one occasion, when sitting under the preached Word with an earnest desire that the Lord would decide the matter, these words came with power into my mind: "I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff." And again: "I will make thee as a brazen wall against this people." Again, when in distress of mind, contending for the truth, these words came to me with much sweetness, as with a still small voice speaking to me: "Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase." These blessed words are as fresh upon my mind now I am writing as when they were applied to my soul, and I believe they will be to all eternity; for what God has done is done for ever. I believe every portion of truth that my soul has received is engraved upon the table of my heart by God the Holy Ghost.

I continued to speak to this people as often as I was there, following my calling as a sea-faring man. But one day, to my surprise, the leading man took the desk and never again asked me to speak. O the depths I sank into! I thought I must have committed myself in some way. O how I did search and examine myself and my poor preaching! I could not find out wherein I was wrong. I begged of the Almighty to show me; but "there was neither voice, nor hearing." I found the wrong rested with the minister, who had sharply reproved the leading man when he knew he had asked me to speak, and said he would not come again if I continued to speak. And this was the end of my first preaching there. Truly "jealousy is cruel as the grave." He thought I should rob him of his ministerial fees; but God knows my heart, that I did not wish to deprive him of anything. Thus all my plans were upset, and the devices of man brought to nought.

I shall never forget the last evening my dear friend William Hall (who asked me to preach) and I spent together. He said, with tears, "How you have borne all this I cannot tell. You have done nothing wrong." He then told me more than I have related. I feel this was only one amongst the all things that shall work together for good.

This was the means of removing me seven hundred miles away – to Jersey, where I drank deeply into the bitters of affliction. I should not be truthful if I said I had no sweets by the way. I followed my calling as a fisherman, and attended a little Baptist cause about five miles from where I lived. On one occasion the minister was taken ill. It was thought he would not be able to speak on the Lord's day, and I was asked to conduct the services; which I consented to do. When my friends and I went to the chapel, to the surprise of us all, the poor man was in the pulpit. He was

so ill that he could hardly get through the morning service. I spoke to them in the afternoon.

After the service there was a church meeting, when it was arranged that I should speak to them every afternoon. The minister did not like this, but the living among the people kept close to me, which so enraged him that he left, and hired another place, and most of the outsiders followed him. I desire to leave him in the hands of God. He heard me one day, when he said the things I spoke of were not fit for the pulpit. I told him what God had taught me in secret He commanded me to proclaim upon the house-top. He soon afterwards gave up the place he had hired and went away. By the help of God, I have been enabled to hold on my way to this day, declaring no other things than those which the prophets and apostles declared: "Peace by Jesus Christ: (He is Lord of all.)"

I must now speak a little of God's dealings with me in providence. After the fishing season was over, I had no employment, and the little money I had was soon spent. I tried hard to get something to do, but every door was shut. For five years I do not think I ever received five shillings for preaching. I lived in a house belonging to the chapel, for which I paid six pounds a year rent. It is, however, just for me to mention that God was pleased to raise up friends to help me in my time of need. I well remember at one time a gentleman called on me. He had heard I was not well, and he asked me to go to his house the next day. Before I started in the morning, I bowed my knees at a throne of grace, and begged of the Lord to go before me, and give me favour in the eyes of the man. We had only a few shillings in the house at this time. When asking the Lord to go before me, these words were very sweet to me: "Ask what thou wilt." I then asked the Lord to put it into this gentleman's heart to give me two pounds. I said, "No more, and no less." I felt if this was granted me, it would be a sweet confirmation to my soul that the thing prayed for was of God.

I started in the morning, begging most of the way, sometimes up and sometimes down. I was received very kindly, and we had some talk about the best things. He then asked if I would walk with him to the bank. When we reached there, he said, "You wait on the outside for me." My eyes were lifted to the Lord, and I said, "Thou knowest I have no riches deposited in this earthly bank; but I do hope I have a precious Christ, who is both bank and banker to me." Truly I felt He is the rich storehouse wherein is treasured up all the riches of grace and glory for all the blood-bought family of heaven. Christ says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth ... where thieves break through and steal." All the wealth I had in this world was only a few shillings. My faith and prayer were proved to be of God, for the gentleman gave me the

two pounds; no more and no less. He promised to let me have more when I wanted it. I would sooner go to my Father in heaven than to an earthly brother.

Many times since then I have had to beg hard for the bread that perisheth; but God has never sent me empty away, nor has He ever given me a stone instead of a piece of bread. Christ says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find," and I have proved Him faithful to His Word, when He has enabled me to ask in faith. This gentleman was much concerned for my temporal welfare. He offered to lend me any amount of money without interest, and he prevailed on me to take a business of some kind.

About this time a coal merchant came to me, and said he wished to part with his business. He said, "I could live comfortably and put by eighty pounds a year." I went to my friend who promised to let me have money, and told him about it. I had appointed to see the coal merchant at his residence the next day. Before I started I felt constrained to ask counsel of God. I felt jealous about the truth of the man's statement, and begged of the Lord to make him speak the truth. When I reached his house, I said to him, "Can I get an honest living in this business?" The man looked at me, and said, "If you want an honest living, there is not a bread and cheese living for you." He then told me how he made it pay – by robbing his customers, at which I was astonished and declined having anything to do with him. Poor man! He was not in my secret. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will shew them His covenant." The fear of the Lord is a blessed ingredient in a man's religion. As Hart says,

"'Twill keep us from sinning, 'twill prosper our ways,
And is the beginning of wisdom and grace."

I desire to leave this man and all his wrong doings in the hands of a just God.

I was now without employment. I tried to get work, but could not. One of my hearers was a miller, whose master owned two or three mills, and he offered to let him one at £52 a year, if he could get a friend with a little money to start with. The man came to me and said, "Here is an opening for you to get a good living." He said if I could find the money he would do the grinding, and that we would share all profits. I mentioned it to the gentleman, who was willing to let me have the money.

Everything went on comfortably for about two years, when things changed, and it was a struggle to make two ends meet. I cannot tell how my dear wife managed; but I do not think we got one pound in debt. She would often say, "It cannot go on long; it must come to a crisis." And so it did; for I was obliged to stop. I went to the landlord and told him I

must give up, when he said, "I wonder you have kept on as long as you have, with such a rogue for a partner." I soon found his words were true. I owed my landlord fifty pounds, which I paid, and everyone else to whom I owed money, as far as I could. I went to the person who had advanced money for me, and told him how I stood. He was very kind, and said he would take the will for the deed.

I had no work to do. The man who had worked in the mill came to me, with tears in his eyes to tell me there was a mill at St. John's which we might have at a very low rent, as it had been standing still some time. He said he was sure we might do. I was overcome by his entreaties, and agreed to take it with him. It was a grist mill. I used to take the weight of grain in the name of the persons to whom it belonged. In the island of Jersey all the farmers have their names on their bags or sacks which they send to the mill. One day I found a bag marked in blue worsted, "J.B." When I went to the mill, I asked if all the bags were right. He said they were. I called them over, and put them down in my book, when I found this one marked "J.B." was missing. He said I had never sent it, or that I might have sold it. I looked at him and said, "Well, you make me out a rogue and a liar." I turned from him as a wounded hart runs to the water to allay its thirst.

I had to go some distance on business along a lonely road, and there I poured out my soul in sighs and groans to the Lord, and pleaded that this piece of dishonesty might be brought to light; and the Lord so blessed me with peace and quietness that I was enabled to leave it all in His hands. Truly these words were fulfilled, "I am the Lord that ... maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish," for in less than forty hours this poor man was running mad.

When I saw him I thought, "Has not God answered my poor prayers?" But, "In such a way as almost drove me to despair." "O!" I thought, "what shall I do? I am in a worse plight than ever." I cannot express what my feelings were. My dear wife and I had to watch the poor man. On one occasion, when his wife was sitting by him and we were downstairs by the fire, she called aloud for help. We went to her, when the man seized my hand with his teeth, like a dog; and there he held me till the blood ran down the corners of his mouth. It was well that my wife was there. She struck him on the throat, which made him let go his hold. He then kicked me, but without injuring me. My wife and I went downstairs and I felt as if I must lose my senses. I begged of the Lord to give me a little sleep, which He did. When I awoke I felt refreshed.

In the morning my wife was looking in a cupboard in this man's house, when she saw the very bag that was lost. The letters "J.B." were upon it. The man had sold the contents and taken the money. O how

God brings hidden things to light, and makes manifest the ungodly acts of poor, empty professors! Truly it might be said in this case, "Be sure your sins will find you out."

The poor man had to be sent home to his parish, and then to an asylum, where he died.

I was left to struggle on as I could. I gave up the mill, and the Lord supported me through the whole, to the honour of His great name.

I strove hard to get employment, as I was very poor; and at last I got work in a foundry. The first money I received was eight shillings, for which I was thankful.

(To be continued)

BOOK REVIEWS

Thoughts on the New England Revival. Vindicating the Great Awakening, by Jonathan Edwards; 294 pages; hardback; price £14.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

The author, Jonathan Edwards, was pastor of the church at Northampton, New England, during the period of spiritual revival in that area. His ministry, together with that of George Whitefield, was used of God to the awakening of many souls from their unregenerate state. Although numbers quoted mean little, it is interesting to note that Joseph Tracy in his book entitled *The Great Awakening* says, "Edwards hoped that more than three hundred were converted in Northampton in half a year." At the request of an English minister, Jonathan Edwards wrote an account of this in *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton*, published in 1737.

Sadly, whenever God works by His Holy Spirit through the ministry, Satan does his utmost to destroy it. This was effected through excesses of natural excitement which bordered on fanaticism. This book was written after Edwards had come under much criticism from other ministers who feared for the genuineness of the work. He has divided the book into five parts. The first part declares the work to be genuine. It is headed, "A Glorious Work of God," and sub-divided into sections showing errors of judgment in not following the Scripture as a guide and a rejection of the work on account of incidental defects.

The second part headed, "Obligation to Promote the Work," chides the critics for their unbelief. The third part headed, "Subjects and Promoters of the Work Wrongly Blamed," shows that extreme spiritual sorrow for sin can produce physical effects on our mortal bodies. The fourth part headed, "Things to be Corrected or Avoided," points out the sad effect of spiritual pride and the claims by some of receiving spiritual revelations and of censuring others regarded by them as unconverted.

The fifth part is headed, "How to Promote the Work," and urges self-examination that stumbling blocks be removed. He says on page 267, "We that are ministers not only have need of some true experience of the saving influence

of the Spirit of God upon our hearts, but we need a double portion of the Spirit of God at such a time as this"; and further he stated, "It seems to me it would be becoming the circumstances of the present day, if ministers in the neighbourhood would often meet together and spend days in fasting and fervent prayer among themselves, earnestly seeking for those extraordinary supplies of divine grace from heaven that we need from day to day."

The publishers state that although Jonathan Edwards is remembered today as the greatest philosopher and systematic thinker of eighteenth century America, he was first and foremost a pastor and theologian. He deals with his subject in a similar way to that of the Puritans and the book contains much sound truth. We commend it to our readers.

J.A.H.

The Divine Challenge – on Matter, Mind, Math & Meaning, by John Byl; paperback; 317 pages; price £8.95; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

The Apostle Paul speaks of "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God" (2 Cor. 10. 5). This academic book aims and succeeds in doing just that.

The "challenge" which John Byl (a Canadian professor of mathematics) refers to is twofold. Firstly, man's challenge to God's supremacy since Adam fell. Secondly, God's "challenge" to sinful man's pretension of knowledge, based on Isaiah 41. 21-23 and Job 38. 1-4, 33-37. It exposes the false philosophy most of the world adheres to today, particularly in maths and science, especially as they underpin atheistic "worldviews."

As with many apologetic texts this book demands some concentration! It deals with complex and highly technical issues at undergraduate level. However, it is clearly and well written. Its chapters are usefully divided into sections and subsections. The conclusions (or summaries) at the chapter ends are invaluable. The reviewer particularly liked the juxtaposition of quotes at the start of each chapter – the first always an eye-opening quote from a godless academic, followed by an indisputable riposte from God's holy Word.

The author argues that the Christian "worldview" provides the only foundation for logic, maths and science. He demonstrates the failure of today's predominant philosophies to provide a coherent explanation of what these disciplines describe.

This book would be a useful gift for a maths, philosophy or science undergraduate. Providing a student knew that only faith in God's Word, as imparted by the Holy Spirit, will truly lead to a rejection of false philosophies, it could be a valuable resource in university debates and common room discussions.

T.J.R.

This is not the usual type of book reviewed in this magazine; but being requested to review it, we feel The Divine Challenge could be of great help to our young people at school and university.

Worship: Its Priorities, Principles and Practice, by J.C. Ryle; pamphlet; 32 pages; price £1.50; published by the Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is typical J.C.Ryle, plain and powerful, originally written as part of *Knots Untied* in 1877. The vital principles are exactly the same today.

Ryle writes as a churchman, loving the Prayer Book and the Liturgy, and his warnings against false worship are especially aimed at Roman Catholicism and Anglo-Catholicism.

The five sections are: the general importance of public worship; the leading principles of public worship; the essential parts of Christian worship (with a most necessary piece on the Sabbath); some things which ought to be avoided in public worship; and, some tests by which our public worship should be tried. There are helpful quotations from the Puritans.

We feel sure our readers will agree with Ryle's insistence that worship *must* be according to Scripture, and with his statement: "True spiritual worship will draw a man into close communion with Jesus Christ Himself.... It will make him hunger and thirst after a sight of the King."

OBITUARY

Constance Mary Barker (daughter of Mr. and Mrs. F.C.P. Pearce), passed peacefully away on July 8th, 2004, aged 89. The following are some fragments collected by her family, and writings she left of her experience.

Our mother was born in Luton on March 24th, 1915, the youngest of six children, and was brought up to attend Ebenezer Chapel, Luton, together with her God-fearing parents, in the days when Mr. J. Kemp was pastor. She lost her mother, who died after being operated on in a London hospital, when she was only sixteen years old. She felt this very keenly and said, "It was as if the end of the world had come."

However, the time came when the Lord called her by His grace. We quote from her writings. "In 1934, when I was nineteen years old, my brother Arthur asked me to go with him to hear a new minister at Barton, Mr. T. Harmer." She went. "The text was taken from Song of Solomon. He spoke of the Beloved coming to gather His lilies and also about whether our names were written in the Book of Life. It made me feel so unhappy and burdened. All I could pray was, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' This was my prayer continually."

In January 1935, she went to stay with her married sister, Mrs. Gladys Gurney, at Ashwell. We have recently found her diary for 1935 where this is recorded: "Mr. W. Haddow of Welwyn was engaged to preach. His text was from Song of Solomon 1. 7, 8: 'Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon.' He came just where I was; I lost my burden and felt so different. Although it was winter time, the world seemed to be a totally different place. I went on in this state for some time. Eventually I came to the place of hymn 958: 'O for a closer walk with God.' Many times have I sung it and meant it."

Our parents were married in 1937 and went to live at Legrave on the outskirts of Luton. She relates one instance during the 1939-45 war. At night she could hear the engines of the awful doodlebug bombs petering out ready to drop anywhere. A voice would say, "You are going to be bombed tonight." It filled her with dread. She writes, "I used to tremble; in fact father had to bring

the bed downstairs. One night I knelt down pleading for my safety, and then Psalm 91. 10 sweetly dropped in: 'There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.' All fear was removed and I could then see it was a temptation from Satan." The bed was taken back upstairs.

During the war years, our parents frequently attended Westoning Strict Baptist Chapel. They moved to Westoning in 1949. Since the special time at Ashwell Chapel when she was twenty years old, mother, and father too, had become quite attached to Mr. Haddow's ministry. He came frequently to Westoning, and they hoped he would become pastor there. Mother had corresponded with him over the years and some letters written to her by Mr. Haddow are recorded in the recently published book of Mr. Haddow's life. We would add that Mother also loved the writings of good men and especially of J.C. Philpot. She also had a prayerful concern for the denomination and God's church at large and was particularly glad when new ministers were sent out to preach.

We remember one particular Christmas when the family was young, she was found weeping in the kitchen; she said she wished she had never been born, evidently feeling her sinnership. However, we can also record some of the love-visits mother experienced. One holiday she visited Winchelsea church, having had a love to the sermons of J.J. West, one time rector there. As she looked around the church her eyes fell upon this verse, from Isaiah 53.5, inscribed underneath a painting: "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." She said, "I was lost to everything around me; it was a sacred spot. I cannot forget these things." On another occasion she was reading 2 Corinthians 8. 9: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." How it was blessed to her! She wrote, "It was the choicest verse in the Bible. How I loved to read it!"

In May 1984, hymn 421 was given out at the prayer meeting. The words, "He will present our souls, unblemished and complete," were sweetly applied to her with the emphasis on "our souls." When Father died suddenly in November that year, she felt then this word was given in preparation for Father's end. She was wonderfully upheld. She also related at this time that one particular Sunday it was the time for the Lord's Supper. Not being a member* she was unable to join them, but those words dropped in: "He will present our souls, unblemished and complete," which made up for all. Later she keenly felt the loss of father and it was then that Psalm 121 became special to her.

On April 19th, 1992, Easter Sunday, she went to the evening service at Bethel, Luton. She writes, "As I was sitting there before the service started, feeling so barren and far off, I was thinking, 'This is the day when Christ arose from the grave.' I had a desire and longing to be led into what it really meant. Then those lines dropped in so sweetly and changed the scene: 'He lives to still His people's fears, He lives to wipe away their tears.' I said inwardly, 'Yes, I know Jesus lives.' Then Mr. Ramsbottom announced his text from Job 19. 25: 'For I know that my Redeemer liveth.' The last hymn was 751 [that same hymn].

* We knew Mrs. Barker well for many years. It is strange that, having received such blessings, she was never able to make an open profession.

I felt sure it would be given out; it seemed to put a band round it all. That was a good Easter Day to me."

In her latter days mother attended Clifton Chapel with her eldest daughter. Although she felt the Bethesda Homes were a good provision for the elderly, she hoped she would not need to go and live there, but four years ago she felt she could not continue to live alone and quite willingly went to the Bethesda Home at Harpenden. She was very happy there. She suffered much pain at times, but as she said, "My pain and affliction is not as bad as my sins deserve." She was somewhat relieved of her pain in September 2003, through a knee replacement.

In April 2004 she had a fall, resulting in a fractured hip. She was operated on, and the doctors did not think she would pull through, as the operation was complicated by heart failure and pneumonia, but she recovered sufficiently to be transferred back to the Bethesda Home, where she was most lovingly cared for. We felt the Lord was still watching over her. However after some weeks her ordeal seemed to show its strain and she started to fade. The Saturday before she died she said, "I won't be long now," and the following day she said to a granddaughter, "I am about to die." She was then asked if she had a good hope, and although obviously very weak, she affirmed positively, "Yes, I have a good hope." Later another daughter reminded her of one of her favourite Psalms, 23: "Can you say the Lord is my Shepherd, and squeeze my hand?" She responded. She passed peacefully away on July 8th, 2004.

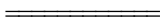
Mother left a letter to her children. In it she wrote, "I would like Mr. Robert Field to take my funeral and to have hymns 160 and 751 as they both have been precious to me. Hymn 160, 'There is a fountain filled with blood' – many years ago as I was waking up one morning I was saying, 'Dear dying Lamb,' which gave me such a longing to have the blood applied; it was precious in the want of it." Hymn 751 was chosen because of the blessing in 1992, as mentioned above. It has been a great comfort to the family that she left on record those things that were made precious to her.

She also requested "to be buried with my dear Henry in Westoning Chapel Cemetery and that the words 'God is faithful' be engraved on my tombstone." She added, "He has been faithful in His promises; I know He has and would bless Him for it." We have since found an extract in her diary, 1994, dated April 8th: "We went to the Annual General Meeting; had a good day. Mr. Ramsbottom's text was 1 Cor. 1. 9: 'God is faithful.'"

She closed her letter to us saying, "May you each find mercy and the blessing of the Lord be with you each and may we all meet around the throne in heaven and not one left behind."

The funeral was taken at Clifton Chapel by Mr. Robert Field, with interment at Westoning. Mr. Ramsbottom concluded with prayer at the grave. We have lost a praying mother.

The family



All the peace and favour of the world cannot calm a troubled heart; but where this peace is which Christ gives, all the trouble and disquiet of the world cannot disturb it.

Leighton

**“BUT WE SEE JESUS, WHO WAS MADE A LITTLE LOWER THAN
THE ANGELS FOR THE SUFFERING OF DEATH, CROWNED WITH
GLORY AND HONOUR”**

(Heb. 2. 9)

With thorns they crown that awful brow,
Whose frown can shake the globe;
And on their King in scorn bestow
The reed and purple robe.

Ah! see the fatal cross appears,
Heart-wounding, dreadful scene!
His sacred flesh rude iron tears,
With agonizing pain.

Exposed with thieves, to public view –
Could nature bear the sight?
The blushing sun his beams withdrew,
And wrapped the globe in night!

Then O what loads of wrath unknown
The glorious Sufferer felt;
For crimes unnumbered to atone,
To expiate mortal guilt!

The Father's blissful smile withdrawn,
In that tremendous hour;
Yet still the God sustained the Man
With His Almighty power.

“’Tis finished,” now aloud He cries,
“No more the law requires”;
And now (amazing sacrifice!)
The Lord of life expires.

Earth's firm foundation felt the shock,
With universal dread;
Trembled the mountain, rent the rock,
And waked the sleeping dead.

Now breathless in the silent tomb,
His sacred body lies;
Thither His loved disciples come,
With sorrow-streaming eyes.

But see, the promised morn appear!
Their joy revives again;
The Saviour lives; adieu to fear,
To every anxious pain.

His kindest words their doubts remove;
Confirm their wavering faith;

He bids them teach the world His love,
Salvation by His death.

Triumphant He ascends on high,
The glorious work complete;
Sin, death and hell low vanquished lie
Beneath His awful feet.

There with eternal glory crowned,
The Lord, the Conqueror reigns;
His praise the heavenly choirs resound,
In their immortal strains.

Amid the splendours of His throne,
Unchanging love appears;
The names He purchased for His own,
Still on His heart He bears.

Still with prevailing power He pleads
Their cause for whom He died;
His Spirit's sacred influence sheds,
Their Comforter and Guide.

O the rich depths of love divine!
Of bliss, a boundless store;
Dear Saviour, let me call Thee mine;
I cannot wish for more.

I yield to Thy dear, conquering arms;
I yield my captive soul;
O let Thy all-subduing charms
My inmost powers control!

On Thee alone my hope relies;
Beneath Thy cross I fall,
My Lord, my life, my sacrifice,
My Saviour and my all.

Anne Steele (1716-1778)

By virtue of His union with the church, which of His own accord He entered into, and His undertaking therein to answer for it in the sight of God, it was a righteous thing with God to lay the punishment of all our sins upon Him, so as that He might freely and graciously pardon them all to the honour and exaltation of His justice as well as of His grace and mercy. In His cross were divine holiness and vindictive justice exercised and manifested, and through His triumph grace and mercy are exerted to the utmost. This is that glory which ravisheth the hearts, and satiates the souls of them that believe. In due apprehensions hereof let my soul live, in the faith hereof let me die, and let present admiration of this glory make way for the eternal enjoyment of it in its beauty and fulness.

Owen

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
SEPTEMBER 2005

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

ALMIGHTY GOD MEETING HIS PEOPLE'S NEEDS

*Sermon preached by F.L. Gosden at Broad Oak Chapel,
Heathfield, Sussex, on July 31st, 1958.*

Text: "The eyes of all wait upon Thee; and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing" (Psa. 145. 15, 16).

This Psalm, if read in conjunction with the 104th Psalm, sets forth in beautiful language the majesty, the sovereignty, the lordship of the eternal God. Both of these Psalms open with an awesome sense of who God is and, resulting from who and what He is, all the benefits of creation, providence and grace, that centre in Him and flow from Him. The 104th psalm: "Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, Thou art very great; Thou art clothed with honour and majesty." And David continues in this Psalm: "I will extol Thee, my God, O King; and will bless Thy name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable." We shall be a humbled people, a sober-minded people, if by the Spirit we are given any right conception of this God who, in His infinite Being, is incomprehensible; and yet has made Himself knowable, and possessable, and seekable, and findable, in the Person of His incarnate Son.

This is the centre upon which the psalmist in both of these Psalms would fix the eyes of faith, although both of the Psalms would embrace, comprehend, the whole universe. The text is true universally: "The eyes of all wait upon Thee." All life, whether vegetable, human, animal or spiritual, is dependent upon God for its maintenance. O God is very great! Blessed, solemn it is to contemplate this great God. It will shrivel us up as to ourselves, and bring us to a proper less-than-nothingness before Him, and yet at the same time give us to understand what we sometimes sing:

"Though I am" – and have – "nothing of my own,
My treasure is immense in Thee."

You see almost the same in the 104th Psalm: "These wait all upon Thee." He has been speaking of "things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts." Joseph Hart beautifully describes this when he

speaks of things “immensely great, immensely small, yet one strange work exceeds them all.” But a gnat derives its life from God and its peculiar life – peculiar to itself; and so does an elephant. He causeth the grass to grow in the field. A sober contemplation and meditation of God in all the various departments of His works is very strengthening to faith, and will give meaning to some scriptures that appear on the surface to be of little importance; and it is a mercy if it brings us inside of them – as, for instance, “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed,” and again, “In Him we live, and move, and have our being.”

“The eyes of all wait upon Thee.” But particularly this intends the eyes of faith, although we should not dismiss that universal power of God manifested in every creature. Creature-ship means dependence. Of necessity creatures are dependent. God alone is independent. God alone needs nothing; but,

“All creatures to His bounty owe
Their being and their breath;
But greatest gratitude should flow
In men redeemed from death.”

But it may be some of you have worshipped God the Redeemer as you have adored the Creator in all His works, His benefits. “The earth is full of Thy riches.” Very humbling! If man had but a sight of the eternal God who has in His hand his breath, who holds all things in being; if proud man – and there is much pride today, the great men of the earth. Moses in his song (Exod. 15) makes the distinction between this great God and the greatest men there are: “Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods?” In the margin there you will find it is, “Among the mighty ones.” “Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods?” Yet these “gods” today are strutting about the earth. We read in Isaiah that the Lord, for the comfort of His people, takes them to a mighty man in the earth and says to them, when his breath was taken away, “Is this the man that made the earth to tremble?” “God is very great.” O if men knew Him, what a difference there would be!

But we must leave men. Do we know Him? It does not follow of necessity because we attend the truth, because we are Strict Baptist, that we know God. We may worship an unknown God. Do we? You might say, “How are we to know whether we worship an unknown God, or a God we know?” Well, one proof would be this – and I am speaking for the benefit of those who are anxious about their state for eternity – do you need what the Scriptures disclose concerning this great God, as He has been pleased that all fulness should dwell in the Lord Jesus, and dwell there to be communicated to poor people? Do you need the God of Jacob (as in the next Psalm) which “made heaven, and earth, the sea and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever: which executeth

judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry"; that Lord that "looseth the prisoners"? Have you been brought to such a condition as that your needs, your weakness, your captivity, your oppressions, your hunger are such that your eyes must be up to this great God? You cannot do without Him. You deeply need Him, and not only need Him, but with that need is there a desire after Him? Well, if you do, you know Him and you would be among those in the text, "The eyes of all" – of all His people – "are upon Thee," in a different way from how the eyes of all other creatures are upon Him, because you by the Spirit have had a discovery of what you need in your soul.

It is worthy of notice that the first part of this Psalm extols this great God and His unsearchable wisdom, speaks of His glorious honour and His majesty, goes on to express the eternity and majesty of His kingdom. Then it seems as though, after unfolding the glories and the majesty of God, it shows us the eyes of all waiting on Him. He is the Centre; the Centre of faith, the End of faith, and He will make Himself the Centre of your life, or your being; make Himself your Refuge in whom you trust, and under all circumstances. And there will be these circumstances. You will be brought into conditions as recorded in the Scriptures of those that have gone before; you will be brought into extremities, into calamities, to the very ends of the earth, have the sentence of death in everything that you are, realise that all outside of Christ is sinking sand. And in everything you will be brought to have your eyes up unto the Lord. That may be just one feature of some trembling sinner who really fears he has no part or lot in the matter of salvation; and yet it may be surprising to you to find that this word describes the attitude of your soul, the direction of your mind, that it is God-ward. The eyes of all poor sinners quickened into life are unto Thee.

"Thou givest them their meat in due season." O this fulness that is treasured up in Christ! He says, "Riches and honour are with Me"; and then He qualifies the nature of the riches and the honour: "Yea, durable riches and righteousness." And He speaks that to the children of men. He says here, "For I will speak of excellent things." O have we an ear to hear? Do you sometimes get a sound even of His distant voice? Have you ever tasted that the Lord is gracious?

"He giveth them their meat in due season." Of course, this is given to those who hunger and thirst for God. He never gives meat to the full. "The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." Now you see whether, as you have come here this evening, or in your attendance upon the sanctuary, you have that connection in your soul with the text that is made in the 95th Psalm: "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the

sheep of His hand.” A particular pasture! O this text is beautifully exemplified in the 23rd Psalm with the pastures there, the meat that the Lord gives; and you notice there that David’s eyes were up unto the Lord when he saw Him. He said, “The Lord” – the eternal God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord of Hosts, the King of kings, the Lord, the sovereign Ruler of the skies, the Lord omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent – “the Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not” – I cannot – “want.” His eyes were up unto the Lord. The eyes of the fool are often in the ends of the earth, beholding some vanity. I am speaking to myself at the moment. O I have no need to go out of the pulpit to find that fool! I mourn over it. If I could, I would live and die in the 23rd Psalm. I live for the most part in Psalm 51.

“The eyes of all wait upon Thee; and *Thou* givest them *their* meat.” The prodigal, when he went away into a far country, far away from his father’s house, went away from plenty to destitution and a famine. Through the mercy of God he began to be in want and would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, but he could not eat them. Ah no, under the renewing of the Holy Ghost he came to himself, and then he could not eat of those husks. They were not his meat; they could not nourish his soul. O for years you may have eaten of “the husks that the swine do eat” in this world, but what a mercy if sovereign grace reaches your heart, and by the regenerating grace of God, by which you are made partaker of the divine nature, you will want spiritual food, and will no longer be able to feed on the carrion, the husks, the filth of this world, any more than the dove which went out from the ark.

“Thou givest them *their* meat.” Now what is your meat? You will know it if you have a spiritual appetite. You will hunger and thirst after God, and the Lord will bring you to hunger, as it was in the days of Moses: He led the people about and instructed them; He caused them to hunger in the wilderness. Have you in your soul that evidence of life, the life of God, because that life can live only upon the provision that God has made in the gospel, and His promise to bless? O be thankful if indeed you are the people of His pasture, the sheep of His hand! If you can truly turn away from the best things of this life – I do not despise them, and I would not speak foolishly. To have sufficient food and raiment we would be thankful, and are undeserving of it; to have a nice home, and even more than benefits, the beauties, it may be, of a garden, and the society of our loved ones and godly friends, these blessings are not to be despised. But can you look at them all and say, “I thank the Lord for meaner things, but they are not my God. *I want God*”? You may not be able to say much.

You may know, it may be, very little about the doctrines; but you have an aching void that only God can fill, a want that He alone can

satisfy; and your eyes are daily upon the Lord. Sometimes, it may be, that is all the strength you have, to look toward His holy temple; and there are some kind words to those whose eyes are there: "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." "They looked unto Him, and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." O is this great God the Centre of your individual life? He is the Centre, the glorious Sun in the firmament of the church; and that is very blessed. But at the moment we are considering our own personal cases, apart from the one sitting next to you. Is this great God your Centre, your End, the only Source from which you can receive life and light and comfort and satisfaction?

Well, this meat that He gives to them is the gospel, and every ingredient of the gospel. And everything in the gospel is eternal, and the only reason is because God Himself is the eternal God, and all the blessings of His grace partake of the divine properties of His infinite Being. O what nourishment, what strength, what beauty, what glory there is in the gospel of His grace! And He gives it.

But He gives them *their* meat. Is it *your* meat? Do you sometimes say, "The gospel, I *love* it"? Sometimes say, "The gospel, I *need* it"? and feel at times some instruction, and realise that it is the gospel that points to heaven and shows the way there? You eat His flesh and drink His blood by faith. O what meat the Lord by His Spirit gives to poor sinners when they feed upon the Lord Jesus Christ, His Person! You will feed upon His Person at times in this way. You want to know what I mean by feeding upon His Person? I mean this, that there will be a revelation by the Holy Spirit of the Lord Jesus in all the sufficiency of His fulness and in all the suitability of Emmanuel, God with us; that He has come to be the Father's Servant, the Servant of the church, to be the Author of eternal salvation, to be a Substitute, a Mediator, to be a new and living Way to God, to be made unto His people wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Is this food? Can you look at every part of it and say, "Lord, there is something in my soul that needs every bit of it"? Are you a big enough sinner to need the gospel with nothing lacking in it? It is a great thing.

"Thou givest them their meat in due season." See whether there is that vital, blessed connection between the provision God has made and the needs that the Holy Spirit has made in your soul for that provision. It would be a searching of our hearts to do so. Think a little of this meat, as, for instance, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus. Do you know it? "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Righteousness. It is justifying righteousness. It is the righteousness procured by a perfect life, by perfect obedience without a flaw; a righteousness which has given to the holy law of God infinite

satisfaction, that has gone to the end of it to obtain this righteousness. Is that worth anything to you? It will be, if you have smelt your filthy rags. Ah, it is necessary for the Holy Spirit to teach us exactly what we are.

You will prize the gospel. There are some things that you will be able to say. I can say this. While my little bit of preaching greatly tries me, I can say this about it, and God knows it is true: I try to preach the gospel, but I preach it as the chief of sinners. I do! It is one distinct feature that I feel in myself as I stand in this awful place, in a pulpit, that I feel the goings forth and lookings forth out of a wretched man unto that blessed Person. Sometimes I have had a glimpse of Him from the pulpit; and if you see Him and His righteousness, and feel a little of His free mercy and sovereign grace, you will rejoice in Him, because you will find in the end what is true throughout, that He is greater than everything in the devil, and He is greater than everything in you.

So He sends His servants really to feed His people. He said to Peter, "Simon ... lovest thou Me more than these?" Peter said unto Him, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." "Feed My sheep." It is the work of the ministry to feed the souls of the people with Christ in the gospel. And O what a blessed Person He appears to be, because there is nothing revealed in this inspired, sacred volume of the gospel that is not Christ Himself. But the Holy Spirit "shall take of Mine, and shall shew it unto you." Do you need life? It may be just the thing you need, and so nothing else will do, nothing different will do; and there is no imitation of life. You may have imitations of some things, but you cannot imitate life. O to possess a spark of spiritual, divine life in the soul! Nothing will kill it. It will take you to heaven. Well, this is food.

"The eyes of all wait upon Thee." *We* wait upon Thee. You will wait upon Him as a sin-burdened, guilty sinner. You will wait upon Him at that fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. You will wait upon Him in His blessed Word, and seek that what is said in the Word may be made a substance in your experience, and that what His Word says may be declared in your soul. It will be food.

Now just this: "The eyes of all wait upon Thee," may be a word in season to some poor soul who feels that he is just outside of everything. There are many things you do not know, but you must know this: are your eyes up unto the Lord? You may feel to have no wisdom or strength to pray. There is prayer in a look. I feel that is the lowest we may dare to describe as prayer, a look. Prayer is expressed in some places by a cry. Jeremiah in the dungeon came a bit lower. He said that the Lord heard his breathing. But I think that a look is the lowest degree of prayer, a living look; and if you by faith have ever looked toward His holy temple, I can assure you that the Lord first looked upon you.

"Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every *living thing*." These "things" may represent what we have in the Corinthians: "God hath chosen the foolish things ... things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." So it may represent poor nothings, "worm Jacobs." Or it would represent "every living thing" *in the soul*. O, there may be some living desires. It says later in the chapter, "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them." What a mercy it is to have any "living thing" in our souls, some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel!

"Thou openest Thine hand." He alone can open it, and when He does, none can shut it. It is a bountiful hand, and when He opens that hand it is not empty. No, it is filled from the magazine of His grace. I read of an expression of a boy, evidently instructed in the Word of God, in those times when there was real poverty. He said to his mother when they came to the end of a barrel of flour, "Mother, God will hear us scrape the bottom of the barrel." Well, it may explain that living faith which, in extremity, looks to the Lord. He opens His gracious hand, both in a way of providence and of grace. Sometimes He will open that hand in a service and drop some handful of purpose. When He does, it will be just suitable to some condition and case of an exercised soul.

"Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing"; and the reason is because these desires are living desires. It is the Holy Spirit within. David says in the thirty-eighth Psalm, "Lord, all my desire is before Thee; and my *groaning* is not hid from Thee." It is a very wonderful thing, if you look at the remainder of that Psalm. O he was in the depths! He had a fresh discovery of what he was by nature. "My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.... My loins are filled with a loathsome disease"; and as though he would say, "Lord, that is not all. Thou knowest that is not all; but all my desires are before Thee: a desire to fear Thy name, a desire and a need to be clothed in Thy righteousness." But He will satisfy the desire of every living thing. "Thou openest *Thine* hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."

Well, may the Lord make this word out to us, and give us to examine ourselves according to the text as to whether this great God has made Himself the Centre of our souls, the End and Object of our faith!

We are mercifully called in grace that we should be freemen under Christ and not bondmen under Moses.

Martin Luther

DISCIPLESHIP

By J.C. Philpot (1802-1869)

What is the exact meaning of the word *disciple*? It means properly a learner, one who is under a teacher, whose submissive and devoted pupil he has become, and from whom he receives continual instruction. Thus a disciple of Christ is one who is admitted by the Lord Jesus into His school, and whom He Himself condescends personally to instruct, and who therefore learns of Him to be meek and lowly of heart.

A disciple of Jesus is one who sits meekly at the Redeemer's feet, receiving into his heart the gracious words which fall from His lips. This was Mary's happy posture, whom the Lord commended for choosing the better part (Luke 10. 42). Such is also the posture of all the saints of God, according to the ancient declaration: "Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand; and they sat down at Thy feet, every one shall receive of Thy words" (Deut. 33. 3).

But a true and sincere disciple not only listens to his master's instructions, but acts as he bids. So a disciple of Jesus is one who copies his Master's example, and is conformed to his Master's image. A sincere disciple is also characterised by the love which he bears to his master. So a disciple of Jesus is one who treasures up the words of Christ in his heart, ponders over the precious promises, and delights in His glorious Person, love and blood. A disciple of Jesus is one who bears some reflection of the image of his heavenly Master; he carries it about with him wherever he goes, that men may take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus (Acts 4. 13). And as when Moses came down from the mount his face shone from the reflection of the heavenly glory which had streamed upon his countenance, so does the true disciple shine before men with some sparkles of the glory of the Son of God.

To have some of these divine features stamped upon the heart, lip and life is to be a disciple of Jesus. To be much with Jesus is to be made like unto Jesus; to sit at Jesus' feet is to drink in Jesus' words; to lean upon Jesus' breast is to feel the warm heart of Jesus pulsating with love, and to feel this pulsation causes the heart of the disciple to beat in tender and affectionate unison; to look up to Jesus is to see a face more marred than the sons of men, yet a face beaming with heavenly beauty, dignity and glory.

To be a disciple, then, of Jesus, is to copy His example, to do the things pleasing in His sight, and to avoid the things which He abhors. To be a disciple of Jesus is to be meek as He was; humble as He was; lowly as He was; self-denying as He was; separate from the world as He was; living a life of communion with God as He lived when He walked here below.

To take a worm of the earth and make him a disciple of Jesus is the greatest privilege God can bestow upon man. To select an obstinate, ungodly, perverse rebel, and place him in the school of Christ and at the feet of Jesus, is the highest favour God can bestow upon any child of the dust. How unsurpassingly great must be that kindness whereby the Lord condescends to bestow His grace on an alien and an enemy, and to soften and meeken him by His Spirit, and thus cause him to grow up into the image and likeness of His own dear Son! What are earthly honours and titles when compared with the favour thus conferred upon those whose foundation is in the dust? Compared with this high privilege, all earthly honours, stars and garters, titles and robes, sink into utter insignificance.

REST

A letter by William Huntington

Dear Mary,

I thank you kindly for the bed, and shall acknowledge it with a suitable return. I slept in it last night for the first time, and begged of my God to remember the manufacturers, who have, like a certain Mary of old time of whom Paul speaks, bestowed much labour on us. And now after all this kindness, what is to be done for thee? Shall I not in return seek rest for thee, my daughter? Yes, I will; I rest upon your bed, and now let me point out a rest for thee.

Zion, says God, is My people; here will I dwell, this is My rest for ever, I have desired it. But what is there in poor Zion that can afford a rest of delight to God? Nothing. He rested after He had made the world, rested well pleased with what He had done, for all was good. He smelt a savour of rest in Noah's sacrifice, after He had in anger destroyed the world; but in the sacrifice of Christ, high Justice rests appaid, and all wrath appeased, and a sweet way is opened for lovingkindness and tender mercy to flow out to poor, sensible sinners. God rested well-pleased on the seventh day at the finishing of the old creation, but He rests better pleased in the new creation. We are created anew in Christ Jesus, and made new creatures: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

But then which part of the work of the new creation does God say He will rest in? Is it in the application of His broken law? No, that works wrath, and makes us appear exceeding sinful. Is it in the displays of His vindictive justice? No, that makes us tremble, so that a horrible dread overwhelms us. Is it in the astonishing views of terrible majesty? O no, that sends the poor vessel of wrath to the bottom of the horrible pit. Is it in the discoveries of His intrinsic holiness? Alas, alas, it was this

that made Daniel's comeliness turn into corruption; under this prospect Job said, "I am vile"; and Isaiah cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone."

But will He rest in the displays and discoveries of His love in Christ Jesus, when He accepts us in the Beloved, and admits us into His favour, His presence and His joy, by the faith of Christ Jesus? As the Lord God of hosts liveth, Mary, that is it; that is His bed, and that is His rest. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," which words are taken from Zephaniah: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing."

This, my daughter, is God's rest, this is the finishing stroke of the new creation, charity edifieth, or raises the edifice, it builds us up in God; and when the Lord builds up Zion, then He appears in His glory (Psa. 102. 16). And this work completed in heaven is thus described: "He hath chosen us in Him ... that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Eph. 1. 4). This is the rest, but Israel entered not into it; and as there is a promise left us of entering into it, see that thou come not short of it. If you ask how we are to enter in, the answer is ready: "We which have believed do enter into rest." Faith in Christ Jesus admits us into the love of God, as John says, "We have ... believed the love that God hath to us."

Having pointed out God's rest, let me tell thee that where God rests, there thou must rest, and thou shalt never find rest short of this, and there are but few that find it. Doubts, fears, horrors and terrors, misgivings and dejections, will at times interrupt and disquiet thee, until the love of God is shed abroad in thy heart by the Holy Ghost. Then faith rests in the eternal love of God, and in the dying love of Jesus Christ, as Paul says: "Hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts" (Rom. 5. 5). Christ, says he, loved me, and gave Himself for me; and who shall separate us from the love of Christ? neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, shall ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8. 38, 39). "This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing." Here we rest from our rebellious war against God; here we rest from our legal, fruitless labour under a yoke of bondage; here we rest from our burdens of sin and shame, guilt and fear; here we rest satisfied with the goodness of our state, we rest filled and we rest contented.

This, my dear girl, is the bed mentioned in Song 1. 16: "Our bed is green." A green bed is a fruitful one, a dry bed is a barren one. Everyone that believes in the love of God is born again. "Every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." This bed not only brings us forth as born of God, but all our fruitfulness to God springs from it. If we have all

knowledge, gifts, tongues, prophecies, yet without charity, or love, we are nothing. This, my dear, makes one day in God's courts better than a thousand spent elsewhere; it makes wisdom's ways pleasantness, and her service perfect freedom; the Saviour's yoke easy, and the daily cross light. It is the bond of the covenant, the cords of the heavenly tabernacle, and the noblest tie among the family of God, which makes them all kindred souls.

I have of late occupied business in deep waters, and am up and down in them to this day. Almost every discourse makes some folks wonder, but they know nothing of the perilous voyages of the poor merchant that seeks out these goodly pearls for them, nor of the unwearied labour that attends their importation. Some of the good gifts from above, and some good news from a far country I here set before you; and see that you make a good use of them, pray over them, and for an application of them, lest you fall after old Israel's example of unbelief; against whom God swore in His wrath, that they never should enter into His rest. They refused the rest of His love, and fell into the gulf of His wrath, with the oath of an angry God pursuing them. But I am persuaded better things of thee, my dear girl, though I thus write, and things that accompany salvation.

My duty to mother and father, and kind love to —.

Ever yours in Christ Jesus,

W. Huntington, S.S.

RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS HATRED BILL

Mr. D.C. Relf, a retired lawyer and deacon at Tamworth Road Chapel, Croydon, has written, asking us to alert our readers, warning of the seriousness of the situation if The Racial and Religious Hatred Bill is finally passed. Having gone through the Commons, it will probably be debated and voted on by the Lords by the end of September or in October.

The danger is that, if the bill became law, it would be used against the Christian position that Christ is the *only* way, and all other religions are false, or against a minister who speaks of the errors of the Papacy.

Recently, Daniel Scot, a Pakistani Christian who refused to convert to Islam, faced the death penalty in Pakistan. Fleeing to Australia, he was convicted under religious hatred laws for what he said against Islam, though speaking reasonably, and faces a possible prison sentence. We fear the same here.

Mr. Relf requests that this important matter be laid before the Lord by our readers. God is still almighty and still in control.

The Christian Institute has taken a firm stand in this matter and would be glad to advise as to the best way to write to members of the House of Lords. Already some peers have said that they have never received as many letters on one issue before.

THE ORIGIN OF EVIL

By J.C. Philpot

The origin of evil has puzzled and baffled the acutest minds that ever existed; and no doubt it will continue to perplex and baffle the mind of man as long as the world shall endure. *How* evil in the first instance originated, and *why* God permitted it to arise in His fair creation, are mysteries unfathomable to man's finite understanding. It is of no use, therefore, for those who fear God to attempt to dive into these unfathomable mysteries, but to leave them as they stand, insoluble by creature intellect.

It is sufficient for those that fear God to know these three things respecting evil. First, that sin *hath* entered into the world; and that we, as connected with our first parents, are involved in it. Secondly, that for those who spiritually know and experimentally groan under sin, as opened up in their consciences by the Spirit of God, there is a remedy, an all-sufficient remedy, in the mediation of God's dear Son. And thirdly, that all evil will be eventually overruled for the good of the church, and for Jehovah's eternal glory.

PRECIOUS, CLEANSING BLOOD

In the providence of God, we were called upon to preach at a certain place where we heard of a young man in a neighbouring village who was lying on a bed of sickness and of death. He was the son of godly parents, but had forsaken his home and enlisted in the army. There the hand of the Lord arrested him. He was seized with what proved a mortal sickness; but then it was that, like the prodigal, he came to himself, and began to cry for mercy. The Lord convinced him of sin, and also gave him some intimations of His goodness. His sickness continued, and he returned home; but it was to die. The friend at whose house we were staying told us of this interesting case, and also that the young man was rapidly drawing near to the gates of the grave.

One morning as we were, according to our usual way, waiting upon the Lord, and seeking some visits of His face and, indeed, much needing them through fresh-contracted guilt in our conscience, these words dropped into our heart with a divine power: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." O the sweetness of the application of sin-atoning blood to a guilty, filthy conscience! O the reviving, rejoicing power of it in the heart! Then our soul could say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul ... who forgiveth all thine iniquities."

“The mercy that heals us again
Is mercy transportingly sweet.”

But we hope our readers know what this sweet application of the atonement is; and if so, they well know that no words of ours can express what is then felt within. Blessed, indeed, is the man whose transgression is thus experimentally forgiven.

Well, we were thus rejoicing and eating our morsel, as the Scripture says: “Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s,” when all at once it came over our mind: “This is not only for you, but for that young man who is sick and dying.” At first we hesitated. We should sooner perhaps have continued at the feast of fat things ourselves than have gone and given a portion to someone else. Besides, we were not quite unacquainted with Satan’s devices, and how he likes to spoil a meal by diverting the attention from the matter in hand. He will be as busy as Martha, if he can only get Mary away from the feet of Jesus. He would like to make us as lean as possible, and even starve our souls, by appearing as a serving devil, and urging upon us at inconvenient seasons to be up and doing.

Well, we hesitated. Besides, the village was two miles away, and the morning was rainy. But still the impression continued; so, after looking to the Lord that we might not be obeying a false impression, but one really from Himself, off we started to call upon the dying young man.

When we arrived at the house, we were struck, even before we entered, with his terrible groans. We went upstairs into the room where he was lying; and if ever we saw despair depicted upon any countenance, it was upon that of this poor young man. It seemed really as if Satan had got possession of him. His groans were terrible. His friends stood around his bed, horrified and appalled; and well they might, for truly Satan’s presence was almost sensible.

At first, we shared to some extent in their feelings. But now came in the use and power of our blessing in the morning. We felt able to speak to the dying man of the power and efficacy of that blood which had thus freshly been applied to our own guilty, filthy conscience. Thus we spoke to him for a while, and saw at once a degree of change come over his countenance. The blood of atonement preached to his conscience by the Holy Ghost was already too much for Satan.

Well, at length we knelt down by his bedside, and besought the Lord that He would be gracious to the dying youth, and would enable him to die shouting victory through the blood of the Lamb.

We returned home. The young man died soon after we left. But the work was done. His friends told us afterwards that his last words were these:

“Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to save my soul from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.”

O the sweet victory of a dying sinner through the blood of the Lamb!

“O precious blood, O glorious death,
By which the sinner lives!
When stung with sin, this blood we view,
And all our joy revives.

“We flourish as the watered herb
With Jesus’ blood in sight;
The blood that cleanses all our sins,
And makes our garments white.”

Probably written by Grey Hazlerigg

DELIVERANCE IN TROUBLE

A remarkable time in the life of Enos Hadley, pastor at Lakenheath, recounted by his wife. Mr. Hadley died on July 31st, 1972, aged 74 (see G.S. 1972, pp 317-320).

In reading Hawker’s portion, May 30th, O how my thoughts are drawn to the experience of it in June 1954! We had only been married a few months, when my dear husband was suddenly taken seriously ill. The Lord afflicted him with a brain haemorrhage. It was a great shock to me to find him so ill. I sat with him two days and two nights; there seemed little hope of recovery. On the third night, friends came in to relieve me and permit me to go to bed and try to get some sleep.

I took my Bible before lying down. I was in a turmoil. All day my enquiry had been: Why has this come? Why had I been brought to Lakenheath, and now my dear one was to be taken from me?

In this state I opened on Job 23. I was not aware of the chapter then, but as I read it, the dear Lord opened it up. “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” I would bring before Him all my arguments. Why had this come to pass? What was the cause? But He showed me: “He is in one mind, and who can turn Him?” Then, “when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” What, me? Come forth as gold? No, I could not believe such a thing then, and for many years it remained in my memory, but I could not lay hold of it. “He knoweth the way that I take.”

Then I turned the pages of the Bible, still looking for His word of comfort, and I came to James chapter 5: “Go to now, ye rich men” – O

I thought this is not suitable, but I felt compelled to read the chapter, and O how suitable was the last part: "Is any sick among you?" etc.

The next day my dear husband was taken to hospital, still delirious. His children had come and grandchildren. [The writer was his second wife.] The next morning I looked at the text for that day: "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." O, I thought, he is surely going to die. But as I was busy preparing dinner for the family, I pondered where this scripture was, but could not think of the circumstance surrounding it. The thought came, it is near John 14, and that is a comforting chapter. We were getting ready to go to the hospital to visit my dear one; I had been fully occupied all morning. We were ready to be off to the hospital, but I felt I must know where that scripture is. The family were waiting for me. I took the Bible and opened on John 11. O the power that came with it! "A certain man was sick." Yes, one whom Jesus loved. Then in large letters it appeared: "This sickness is not unto death." I had to call the others and tell them, I was so certain it was true.

As we drove to the hospital by car, I wrote two letters as best as I could, one to my husband's father and mother, and one to my own father, to give them the good report. These letters were posted in the town before we went up to the hospital. I was so certain this sickness was not unto death that I said, "If the surgeon comes out and tells us there is no hope of recovery, I shall withstand him."

For two more days he lay without speaking, still delirious. Then the surgeon said he would be moved to St. Albans and possibly have an operation on his head. Evidently the haemorrhage was not healing and they intended investigating further. But that day Mr. Hadley spoke a few words to us. I thought there was no need for him to go to St. Albans – a long journey by ambulance. My faith was tried. I felt he could not stand the journey; it would make matters worse. It was a mountain before me.

The arrangements were made for the next day. St. Albans seemed such a long way from home. I was to stay with Mr. Kemp at Luton. But O how sweet it came and stilled all my fears:

"Why those fears? Behold, 'tis Jesus
Holds the helm, and guides the ship"!

Immediately there was a calm, and I could feel the ambulance going along so smoothly, and so it proved. The men were very kind. My dear husband did not get agitated, and we arrived safely. The sister at the hospital was very kind and gave me the privilege of going in at any time. "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble."

The day came for the operation. All was prepared. The surgeon began and many x-rays were taken, and the verdict was: it is healed,

nature has healed it. When the surgeon told my dear husband this, he said, "The God of nature hath done it." And so he was restored. The surgeon gave him six months to live, but the Lord lengthened out his life for another eighteen years. He was gradually strengthened and enabled to preach again in October 1954 and afterwards. His text was: "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." This was felt to be true and we rejoiced that he was restored.

Written May 30th, 1977

THE GOSPEL STANDARD TRUST 39th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*Report of the Meeting held at The Particular Baptist Chapel,
Swavesey, on Saturday afternoon, May 21st, 2005*

After the singing of hymn 681 the Chairman, Mr. G.D. Buss, read from Luke, chapter 7 verses 36 to 50, and Mr. B.E. Izzard (Pastor, Fenstanton) prayed. In welcoming the members and friends, the Chairman made a few remarks on the portion he had read. The woman with the alabaster box of ointment had to bear reproach but it was recorded of her, "she hath done what she could." It was the desire of the Trust to give what help it can amongst the churches for the honour and glory of Christ.

The Secretary then reported on the accounts and the work of the Trust. Reserves had risen by about £76,000 to £975,000 as a result of a further chapel sale. £100,000 had been received from the proceeds of sale of Shaftesbury Avenue Chapel, London, during 2004. Grants had totalled £46,200 and the main beneficiary was Bexley Chapel, which had received help by way of a grant of £24,000 and a loan of £32,000 towards re-roofing. So far in 2005 grants totalling about £60,000 had been agreed. Sadly much time is now involved with the closure of chapels. The Secretary gave examples of the different requirements on disposal in trust deeds to make it clear how important it is to proceed according to the trust deeds, obtaining guidance from the Charity Commission as necessary. There had been continuing involvement with chapel houses and he emphasised the importance of retaining use in accordance with the trust deed and charging rent where required in accordance with the Charities Act 1993.

The number of publications sold had been lower in 2004 due to the absence of a major new book. Nevertheless there was still much work carried out in the book room, and the Secretary went through some of these activities, such as the translation of the children's books into

various foreign languages and engaging translators to check the translations, the time needed with book production in the typesetting of the authors' manuscripts, proof-reading, searching out suitable cover pictures and providing all this direct to printers as e-mail attachments. Printers in the Far East are very efficient and much cheaper than in the U.K., and companies in Hong Kong, Korea and Singapore have been used. The Publications website has generated considerable interest with the site receiving up to 1,000 visitors per month. Requests are received from the Third World for free literature and we give what help we can by sending copies of our own publications. The Trust is hoping to publish a new book about another of our hymnwriters in due course, and whilst this is a mammoth task for the author in referring to family wills and those of acquaintances, reading church books, tracing family archives, etc., the author comments, "It looks a mountain but climbed slowly I hope to reach the top, God willing."

Reference was made to the report and accounts of the Library bound in with the Trust report, the excellent range of books available, and the increase in the number of books lent during 2004. A catalogue is available both in hard copy and computer pdf format.

The Chairman thanked the Secretary for his report and for his labours and the labours of the Publications Manager and Mr. John Kingham and others behind the scenes. There were no questions on the annual report and accounts, and these were received by the members. The three committee members retiring by rotation, Messrs. T. Abbott, H. Mercer and T.J. Rosier were re-elected. The auditors, Mazars LLP, were re-appointed.

A special resolution to change the Memorandum of Association was then introduced by the Secretary. The wording of the resolution had been approved by the Charity Commission. Trustees cannot profit from their office. In more recent years, however, it has been recognised that there may be circumstances where it is in the interests of a Charity to pay one or more of its trustees for specific services.

Mr. John Kingham has given invaluable help without charge to the denomination over many years from his expertise in information technology. His circumstances had changed in 2004 and the committee felt that he ought to be paid for his technical expertise and general services in the book room. This could have been done without any change to the Memorandum, by Mr. Kingham resigning from the committee. However, the other committee members felt that he ought to remain. The necessary change to the wording of the Memorandum was passed as a special resolution without dissent.

The Chairman thanked the friends at Swavesey for their hospitality. He referred to the works of two authors. First, J.C. Philpot and the

selection from his sermons for daily readings in *Ears from Harvested Sheaves*. He recommended the young people to read these daily portions with the chapter from the Bible. Whilst J.C. Philpot was a very learned man, the simplicity of his ministry was such that even the illiterate could receive his preaching under the power of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, he referred to the volumes of Bible Lessons by Mr. G.L. Tenbroeke, taken from the articles in the *Friendly Companion* with questions designed to bring forth further enquiry.

Hymn 755 was then sung followed by the address by Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom on "Forgiveness – and its Effects." Request was subsequently received for this address to be printed in its entirety in the *Gospel Standard*. The meeting concluded with the singing of hymn 258 and the benediction.

D.J.P.

FORGIVENESS – AND ITS EFFECTS

*Address given at the Gospel Standard Trust Annual Meeting
on May 21st, 2005 (published by special request)*

Mr. Chairman, beloved friends, some time ago I remarked to the executive of the Gospel Standard Trust that I felt at these annual meetings the subject spoken on should always be something of great importance. Their reply was to invite me to speak at this meeting, and to speak on the subject: *forgiveness and its effects*. The implication being, with which I entirely agree, that this subject *is* one of the utmost importance.

Beloved friends, it is a subject of the utmost importance because, apart from God's forgiveness, there can be no hope, there can be no salvation, there can be no heaven. These are vital things we are considering today. Really it is such a vast subject and the time is so short that I can only hint at a few things.

1. *The need of forgiveness*. The first thing, of course, is the need of forgiveness, the need which every single one of us has of God's forgiveness. That is because God is holy and righteous and just, because we are sinners in His holy sight, because we disobey His law, because we have rebelled against Him, because we are not fit to be seen in His presence. Right through the Word of God from beginning to end, we have the solemn insistence on the sinner's need of forgiveness. "Who can forgive sins but God only?"

When God created man, He created him upright without sin. There was no need of forgiveness; man could walk in communion with God.

When “sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,” man, as a fallen creature liable to divine wrath, stood there naked before a Holy God and this, his great need, forgiveness. Is there any way in which such a guilty sinner may be forgiven?

Of course, there was no necessity laid upon the three-one God to forgive sin, to pardon sinners. The wonderful thing is that God is a sin-pardoning God. Lovingly, graciously, He undertook to be a sin-pardoning God. There was a remarkable case that is mentioned in Scottish church history. There was a most wicked man who was condemned to death in the county of Ayr, and during the few days between his condemnation and his execution there was a real work of the Spirit of God. The godly ministers were pleased to welcome it; they could not deny it. When this evil man, now a pardoned sinner, was led up to the scaffold, he was permitted to speak just a few words to the crowd who were watching and these were his few words: “God is a great forgiver, *God is a great forgiver.*”

2. *The ground of forgiveness.* The ground of God’s forgiveness is mercy, sovereign mercy. Apart from that there could be no hope, there could be no forgiveness; but God is merciful and He loves to show mercy. In the covenant of grace He decreed that He would show mercy to those sinners that He chose out of the ruins of the fall, on whom He set His love, and whom He gave into the hands of His beloved Son. So in the glorious covenant of grace we see God’s mercy reigning and, as you know, the terms of the covenant of grace go like this concerning all God’s chosen: “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more.” So we can sing:

“Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?”

“Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy.”

3. *The meritorious cause of forgiveness.* Now if mercy be the original ground of God’s forgiveness, the meritorious cause is the work of the Lord Jesus and the precious, sin-atoning blood that He shed. So Calvary really is the place of mercy, the place of forgiveness. Now the solemn, simple point really is this. How is it possible for mercy to reign, how is it possible for God to forgive a guilty sinner, if He is still to be a just, holy and righteous God, and if His law has to be honoured? So eternal wisdom drew the plan, and nothing but eternal wisdom could have drawn it. A way in which “God might both be just, and the Justifier

of him which believeth in Jesus," how He could be just in punishing sin and merciful in forgiving sin. We see it all in the cross of Christ.

I am so pleased to see so many young people here this afternoon, and perhaps to give an extremely simple illustration, an illustration that has so often been given how mercy cannot be shown at the expense of justice, how pardon cannot be merely on the grounds of mercy without satisfaction. I suppose most of you know the old story of the two little boys who were bosom friends. After leaving school they never met for many years and when at last they did meet, it was in sad circumstances. It was in court: one was the judge and one was the man in the dock who was standing trial. To put it as briefly as I can, the judge had to pronounce that the man was guilty. He still loved him for old times' sake, but he was a judge and he could not dispense with justice, so he had to pronounce him guilty. But then, to the amazement of all present, as he pronounced him guilty and announced what the heavy fine was which must be paid, which the criminal was completely incapable of paying, the judge left his bench and came down and stood by the side of the guilty man and said, "Now I pay every penny which you owe as your debt to justice." Now that is just a simple illustration, justice and mercy.

We think of the glories of the Saviour's work:

"He took the dying traitor's place,
And suffered in his stead."

Justice must be satisfied so that mercy might reign. Jesus the incarnate Son of God must pay the debt that the sinner might be freely forgiven; so forgiveness is free but forgiveness is never cheap. It comes to a lost, ruined, guilty sinner through the blood of Christ.

"He took the dying traitor's place,
And suffered in his stead,
For man (O miracle of grace!)
For man the Saviour bled."

4. *The gospel of forgiveness.* Now the gospel of the grace of God is a gospel of pardon.

"It speaks of pardon, full and free,
Through Christ, the Lamb once slain."

That is why it is spoken of as "the glorious gospel of the grace of God." In the gospel, pardon is provided, pardon is promised to the vilest sinner out of hell, who lives by the Spirit of God to feel his need, and is blessed with repentance and true confession. There forgiveness is made known. We think of one or two beautiful texts: "Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sin." "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through

this Man,” this glorious Man, “is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.” What a glorious gospel that sets forth forgiveness in the Lord Jesus without money, without price, for a lost sinner who has no hope in himself, no plea but the blood of Jesus, who is brought on mercy’s ground to confess his sin and there to rest on the atonement the Lord Jesus has made! It is a blessed gospel we have, beloved friends, that sets forth the wonders of pardon, the wonders of forgiveness to the chief of sinners.

5. *The accompaniments of forgiveness.* May I say that when the gospel speaks of pardon, there are one or two very gracious and very precious accompaniments with it, because forgiveness is not alone. Let me mention just three of them. Shall we call them the *accompaniments* of forgiveness which are so graciously made known by God in the gospel.

i. The first is this: *redemption*. God himself joins these two things together: “In whom we have redemption through His blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins.” That is, those who are forgiven have an interest in all the blessings of a finished redemption.

“Redeemed, with Jesus’ blood redeemed,
His beauties called to trace,
No angel can be more esteemed,
Than sinners saved by grace.”

ii. The second accompaniment: *righteousness*, the glorious righteousness of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, which is imputed by the Spirit of God to that sinner who is enabled to confess his sin. “Through this Man,” this glorious Man, “is preached unto you the forgiveness of sin,” and by Him we are “justified from all things, from which (we) could not be justified by the law of Moses.” You see, there may be a person committing a dreadful fault, and he may be freely forgiven, but no one on earth can declare him faultless, guiltless; but through the blood and righteousness of Jesus a holy God can, and a holy God does.

iii. The third thing that accompanies forgiveness is *adoption*, a place among the children of God. This was one of William Gadsby’s favourite themes. How he used to speak of it, in his early days speaking of the king, in his old age of the new young queen, Victoria! He said that, in those days of capital punishment and public hanging, occasionally the sovereign would forgive a criminal and he was exempted from the death penalty, and everyone was full of wonder and amazement at the kindness and the mercy. But Gadsby used to say, “But the queen would never think of taking that pardoned criminal to the palace and honouring

him, and giving him a place among the children. It was unthinkable.” But his point was: that is exactly what the Lord does with pardoned sinners. They are redeemed, they are given a glorious righteousness not their own, but then they are put among the children of God. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us,” pardoned sinners, guilty sinners, “that we should be called the sons of God.”

6. *The experience of forgiveness.* Then, of course, there is the vital part of it and that is the experience of it, the gracious experience of it, the Holy Spirit’s work in a sinner’s heart, in greater or lesser measure making the blessing of pardon known through Jesus’ precious blood. I say, “in greater or lesser measure,” because some of God’s people have the full sweet assurance of it and others have a trembling hope. You see, we must not just talk about these things as doctrines. The Holy Spirit’s work is to make a sinner feel his need of forgiveness, he deserves to be condemned. There is no hope for him unless he is forgiven; and so, led by the Holy Spirit, he prays for forgiveness, he seeks forgiveness, and the Holy Spirit shows where it is to be found in the Person of the Lord Jesus. The wonder of it, the freeness of it, the Holy Spirit makes known, the sweet promise of it. And so the sinner, enabled by the Spirit of God, ventures on the Saviour and rests on Him for pardon, and in greater or lesser measure has some little gracious assurance of it. Enabled by the Spirit of God, resting on God’s promise, there is a word like this: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” “And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

I saw the attraction of this in my early days spiritually: a truly confessing sinner is a forgiven sinner, because God has promised. O to be clear on that point – am I really a confessing sinner? Do I know real contrition? Am I blessed with true repentance? Because if so,

“Come, then, repenting sinner, come;
Approach with humble faith;
Owe what thou wilt, the total sum
Is cancelled by His death.”

Think of that wonderful Job chapter 33, the gospel in the Book of Job. “He [the Lord] looketh upon men.” He is listening; many sounds He hears but can He hear the voice of a confessing sinner? “If any say, I have sinned,” the fact of it; “and perverted that which was right,” the evil of it; and “it profited me not,” the foolishness of it, no excuses, “He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.” As old Mr. George Crowter used to say so often: “What a wonderful thing that a poor, unworthy sinner can go to the great God of

heaven and say, I am sorry!” and that great God is not angry, rather is pleased.

I just want to touch on one point. There seems to be a saying amongst us about a person, who is a believer, “not being pardoned,” or “not knowing the pardon of sin.” Ministers even say that for baptism it is not necessary to receive the pardon of sins first. But surely the qualification for baptism is to be a true believer, and surely a true believer must be forgiven? Well, of course, those ministers are thinking of the sweet, sacred, felt sense of forgiveness in the sinner’s heart. This is what so many people need, and this is what is being referred to when a godly person says, “I have not had the forgiveness of my sins.”

Now as I have noticed the Lord’s dealings with His people over the years, some especially have a sense of the love of Christ. Some have a sweet assurance they are children of God. Some hear the Lord’s voice speaking with sweet assurance to their heart. Some have a view of the sufferings of Christ in Gethsemane and at Calvary. Some feel especially the application of the precious blood. Some look up to heaven and see the Lord there as their righteousness. Some are especially led into the blessing of pardon and forgiveness. And, you know, some “first after Jesus reach, and richly grasp the whole,” in the sweet simplicity of God-given faith. It is a subject I want to speak very tenderly on, but the point I come to is this: that every spiritual blessing that God gives, *every* spiritual blessing, has the element of pardon, the element of forgiveness in it.

7. *The effects of forgiveness.* Well then, now the *effects* of forgiveness. I take that really to mean the effects of forgiveness in the heart of a forgiven sinner. Well, there are many of these gracious effects. Let me just mention three of them.

i. The first effect of forgiveness known and felt must be *gratitude and love*. “What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?” If you, as a guilty sinner, have a little sweet hope that God in love and mercy has pardoned your sins in Christ and received you graciously, then you will know something of what Toplady calls “sweet gratitude.” Our hymnwriter says:

“All creatures to His bounty owe
Their being and their breath;
But greatest gratitude should flow
In men redeemed from death.”

O that love to the Lord, that He should ever look on such a wretched, ruined, guilty, hell-deserving sinner and pardon him. John Kent said,

“Blessed with the pardon of her sin,
My soul beneath Thy shade would lie,
And sing the love that took me in,
While others sank in sin to die.”

Why me, Lord, why me?

At Luton some years ago we had a quaint old man. When he was young he was greatly blessed with a sacred sense of the forgiveness of his sin. He had been a church member over seventy years and he used to delight to tell how as a very young man he was in dreadful distress over the weight of his sin and guilt, feeling there was no hope, no pardon for him, no forgiveness. He almost went out of his mind and was under the doctor, and he tried all kind of things and had this medicine he had to take regularly every day. Then came that favoured time when the Lord spoke peace and pardon into his soul through Jesus Christ. He used quaintly to say, “The first thing I did was to take the bottle of medicine and pour it all down the sink.” When he was an old man with us, his mind had almost failed, but if anybody spoke to him and asked him how he was, he would say he was a pardoned sinner, he was a forgiven sinner. That was almost all we could get out of him in his last days. It was very, very seldom I called on him at the prayer meeting because he kept saying the same thing over and over again, and he did not know how to stop. His wife used to have to pull his jacket and make him sit down in the end. But sometimes we did call on him, because it was such a delight to hear an aged man in his nineties standing up and crying out to the Lord and thanking Him over and over and over again for the blessing of forgiveness.

ii. Now the second effect of forgiveness known and felt is a *sanctifying* effect. The first time we have the word *forgiveness* in Scripture is in Psalm 130 (and of course, that is the passage on which Dr. Owen compiled his great work on *The Forgiveness of Sin*). “If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, *that Thou mayest be feared*.” That is the effect – a godly fear. The enemies of truth would say, if a sinner is freely forgiven, then will it not lead to Antinomianism? But grace that saves always sanctifies, pardoning grace always sanctifies, forgiving grace always sanctifies, and the forgiven sinner would do anything rather than sin against such a loving, forgiving God.

You see, some would trust their repentance for forgiveness, some would trust a priest for forgiveness, some would trust the sacrament for forgiveness, but those who have *found* forgiveness through the merits of Jesus are those who die to sin and live to righteousness, who long to be kept from sin, whose chief desire is to live to the honour and glory of God.

iii. The third effect of forgiveness known and felt is to have a *forgiving spirit*. Perhaps the most blessed example in Scripture, next to the Saviour, is Joseph. That forgiving spirit in the Saviour, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” But to see it in Joseph, the way his brethren had treated him. You see, this is where we come so far short. How easy to have an unforgiving spirit, a wrong spirit, a hard spirit, an unchristian spirit, a God-dishonouring spirit! How we need to pray, “Lord, renew a right spirit within me”! It is not easy to forgive (is it?) but how the Lord emphasises it! “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.”* As Paul says, “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” It would be a blessing in our churches if we knew more of this forgiving spirit. “Be ye kind one toward another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

I want to close with a piece which I came across on this very point. I thought it was a very beautiful little piece, actually written by the eminent John Calvin, the reformer (John Calvin: *Sermons on Ephesians*, sermon 33):

“It is impossible that we should taste God’s mercy unless we are touched with compassion and have our hearts completely purged of that cursed feeling of rebellion. So then, even though Paul has exhorted us to things that are very hard, and even utterly repugnant to man’s nature, and which cannot be brought to pass unless God works them, yet nevertheless the remonstrance that is made here ought to prevail so much with us as to make us forget all wrongs. For granted that another man has offended me, what then? Can I make myself out to be righteous and innocent when I come before God? Alas, there are so many iniquities and transgressions in me that I should be confounded a hundred thousand times.

“Should one thought, then, committed against me be unpardonable, and shall a hundred, yes a whole million that I have committed against God be nothing? What am I in comparison with His sovereign majesty? So then, following this warning of Paul, whenever at any time we are moved to impatience for any displeasures or wrongs, and have any desire for revenge, let us learn to collect our thoughts and to consider what we are. First of all, if a man has committed any fault against us, we ourselves do the same or far worse. On the other hand, let us consider how God has redeemed us, yes and especially by that most precious pledge of the shed blood of His only Son. Have we deserved that?

* Rowland Hill used to read the Lord’s prayer during his services, but it is said there was always a long, solemn pause before he read the words: “as we forgive them that trespass against us.”

“Again, what has moved God to show Himself so merciful to us? Nothing else but our wretchedness. Seeing then that He who is so good, though not being of our nature, has nevertheless had compassion on our wretchedness in which we were plunged, what shall we do? Ought we not to have much more compassion for one another because we find in ourselves that which we pardon in our neighbours? God can find no infirmity in Himself, and how then can He be moved to forgive us? Even because He is the fountain of goodness and mercy.

“When I see what grieves me in my neighbour, if I examine myself well, I shall find what is similar there, and much more so. Ought not all these things to lead me to show compassion, if I did not forget myself too much? The way then to make it easy for us to forgive many faults and to bear with many vices that may displease us is to cast our eyes upon the inestimable love which God has shown us in the Person of His Son.”

THROUGH MANY DANGERS

*The autobiography of Isaac Lewis (1823-1896), for over twenty years
pastor at Staplehurst, Kent
(Continued from page 258)*

I must now speak of the time when I had to leave the Island of Jersey. I had many times begged of the Lord to bring me out of that place and from that people. The Lord gave these words to me: “Ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you” – and so He did. The Lord laid a heavy affliction upon my poor body for several months. Many people thought I could not live, and I thought so myself. The doctor said he could do no more for me; but he advised me to go to my native place, and my wife wished me to go. We had no money, but she said we must sell a timepiece we had. One of my hearers who had always been kind to me in word only, for his heart was as hard as a stone, let my wife have twenty-five shillings upon the timepiece. He took it to a watchmaker and had it valued. After I had left, he and his wife came to my poor wife and wanted some glass to make up the value, as they said, but my wife told them they had good value for their money; and so they had.

I felt much in having to leave my wife in this, to her, desolate island, without a friend to help her, with no money, and the rent of the house to pay. I can never forget the morning I left her. When the conveyance came to take me to the boat, I got up, but fell back upon the couch. My strength failed me. In my fainting I sighed to the Almighty, and He gave me strength to get to the conveyance. The man who drove me was a

Primitive Methodist. He was very kind, and would not take anything for his trouble.

The sea air soon began to strengthen me; but O the distress of my soul – no home, no friends to take me in, and in such a weak state of health, I dreaded to meet my friends, as it was suggested to me they would say, “This is the man who went out full, and is come home empty. He went out to preach; he is deceived; and is wrong altogether.” And they did say this, and much more. O the sinkings and the fears I had that I should have no place to lie down in.

Blessed be God, He brought me to my native place in safety. I went to see my half-brother, who was glad to receive me. He had been laid by some time with a bad leg. When I told him I had no place to go to for the night, he said I could sleep with him, as his wife was gone out. I felt this was a timely interposition of the Almighty. I remained here just long enough, until another kind friend, and one who feared God, took me in. I began to gain strength and tried to get employment; but could not succeed.

One day I was sorely pressed in my feelings that the Lord would not appear; when suddenly these words came to me: “The Lord can make a way where there is no way.” I said, “True, Lord; but how can it be brought about?” I was soon shown what God could do. The very situation I left I had to take again, as the young man who had been there ever since I gave it up would not remain any longer. He gave no cause why he wished to leave. I believe it was because the Lord would have it so, to make room for me. Truly I could see the hand of the Lord in it. I went to work with a willing mind, and the Lord just gave me strength to labour for the bread which perisheth.

At the end of the month my dear wife came to me. She was obliged to sell all the furniture, with the exception of our bed, to pay the rent and get to me. This kind friend took her in. After a little time, my wife said, “We must have a home of our own,” and she hired one. When I entered my new abode I looked round, and although we had little more than my sea chest and my wife’s box, I felt I was better dealt with than the Lord of heaven and earth, who had not where to lay His head. With God’s blessing, and using great economy, and with hard work, we soon had a comfortable home.

My troubles were not, however, at an end. The work of the ministry was often heavy upon my mind. I feared sometimes that I was deceived altogether, both as to my call by grace and the work of the ministry. Still I could not give it up, because it had taken such a root in my very soul that the salvation of my soul seemed to hang upon it. O the cries and sighs and groans that went up to the Almighty that He would make it

plain. One morning I was going to my labour when the Lord applied these words to my soul: "The vision is yet for an appointed time ... though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." I said, "O Lord, I can wait for it now; it matters not how long." Nor do I believe this left me till the time came, though I had to wait fifteen months before I dared take a text to speak from. I had to be as a dumb man, in whose mouth are no reproofs. Zacharias had to be dumb till the day that those things should be performed; so that I was not the first man who had to be dumb for a season.

Blessed be God's holy name, He is not only a promising God, but He is also a performing God. When I was asked by a person how I could remain so quiet, I said, "My time is not come to open my mouth; but when my time does come, I shall not stop again till death comes." I dare say the poor man thought I spoke with pride, but I do believe I spoke as prompted from within.

Not long after this, one Lord's day my wife said to me, "Are you not going to chapel?" I said, "No, I am not." I had an impression on my mind that the Lord would meet with me in my house. I went to my bedroom, and fell upon my knees, and had not long opened my mouth before I had a blessed faith's view of the Lord Jesus Christ suffering as my crucified, now risen, exalted Redeemer. My heart was broken, and my eyes ran down with tears, and I could not help breaking out in an ecstasy of joy, calling Christ all the endearing names I could think of. I talked so loud that if some people had heard me they would have thought me mad. How true it is that "the heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joys." As soon as the power had subsided a little, I begged of the Lord to settle the matter in my soul about the work of the ministry. I rose from my knees, took the Bible, and told the Lord that where I opened I would read, which was Matthew 20. 7: "Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive." I said, "I will go wherever Thou art pleased to send me."

About fourteen days from this time a door was opened for me twenty-two miles from my home, where I have often travelled on the Saturday evening after my day's labour, sometimes wet to the skin, and no dry clothes to put on. I have preached three times on the Sunday, returned on Monday morning with sometimes money out of pocket, and sometimes one-and-sixpence in my pocket. More doors were opened for me than I could supply. I have tried my best to preach God's truth for twenty years. I have never set any price upon my poor services, and never but once asked for more money, when ten shillings were given me

for three services, and I asked for three shillings more, so that I might pay my travelling expenses and save me the trouble of walking. The leading deacon was a man of good means; but he had a covetous heart. He said they were a poor people, and I think he said as I had calls nearer home I had better accept them. I took him at his word. On the following Sunday I gave notice that on that day month I should leave them, and bid them farewell. The living souls were struck dumb with astonishment. I left them, and I have never regretted doing so. For the last few years I have supplied regularly at two or three places, and by the help of God I continue to this day, the way He has led me to the place where I am now writing.

While in Essex, as I before said, I supplied three different places. To one place I went twice in the month, and once a month to the other two places: and I thought I was settled for life. "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand," and He will do all His pleasure. I found that labouring six days for the bread that perisheth, and then on the seventh, up and travel twelve or fourteen miles, then go through three services, and return home at night, brought a weary body on Monday morning – and this for six or seven years, and I do not know that I missed going only three Lord's days during the whole of that time, and that was through ill-health. Besides this, now and then I had a day to supply at other places, which was an understanding with the friends at Tillingham.

About twelve months or more before I left those places in Essex to come where I am now, there was such a death come over all my preaching that I wondered what was coming upon me. It made me so dissatisfied with myself, my place with the people, and everything that I had to do with, that at last my soul was drawn out in prayer to the Almighty that He would bring me out and open a way for me that I might go to some place, and there labour amongst the people stately in Word and doctrine. And the more I kept crying to the Lord for deliverance, the more I felt bound in my preaching; and sometimes I thought that the people were all dead and I was dead also. If I could have given up all thoughts of preaching with a quiet conscience, I surely should have done so.

One evening, as we were driving home from one of those places, I said to my wife, "This work will kill me"; and she made her own comment upon it, which was just in accordance with my own feelings. My discourse that afternoon bounded back into my own bosom; and there lies a deep secret here, namely, that when the Lord enables a servant of His to draw out his soul to the hungry, it is like the fond mother drawing out the full breast to the hungry child. The mother is eased and the

hungry child satisfied. And so with the living family; and this binds minister and people together. It is the sincere milk of the Word that the child of God wants, and not the London sky-blue: that is, truth well dashed with human composition. Truth got out of the waters and out of the fires is too dearly bought to be parted with for toys.

Well, to return. My cry was, "Lord, do deliver me from this place, and open a way Thyself, and do go before me." We want the Lord to lead us and go before us; but at the same time we lay our own plans, and then want the Lord to work by them, but this He never will.

In the order of God's providence, it fell to my lot to go to a people that a good old man named William Bugg had been over for more than twenty years. Some of those people were his own children, and they had a great desire to hear him once more before he died; but they never did, as my sequel will show. This dear old man had been rather bitter against me, through lending his ears to tale-bearers who brought a false report to him; and when this reached my ears I was wounded and grieved. Indeed, my spirit at last got soured, and I thought I would give him a stroke for this; and surely I should have done if I had been left to myself. But it was not so.

One Lord's day he was appointed to preach at my own native place, and my wife went to hear the dear old man; and when I came home on the Sunday evening, I said "Well, my dear, how did you get on with friend Bugg?" "O!" she said, "he won't be a trouble to anybody long; for I believe his time here is short, for he looked like a dying man as he stood in the pulpit." At this news all my hard thoughts and bitter feelings towards him fled, and I felt such a love spring up in my soul to him as a servant of God that I could have done anything for him. We are commanded not to love in word only, but in deed; and I am well persuaded that love in the heart will bring that man or woman to love God and His people, and yield sweet obedience to the commands of God in His Word. In keeping His commands there is great reward; not *for*, but *in* keeping them.

Well, a thought came into my mind that I might be of some service to the dear old man in this way, as I knew that he was engaged most of his time in Kent. I thought I would take a Sunday or two for him and let him stop at home, and the first opportunity I had, which was in not more than about a fortnight, I sent word by one of the friends; and when this friend told him my proposition, he was completely beaten. The dear old man said, "Thank him; I will let him know as soon as I return from Kent." He was engaged for Staplehurst the next Lord's day. So you will see the lot was cast into the lap, and the whole disposal thereof was of the Lord.

When the dear old man had tried to preach in the morning, for he had the arrow of death sticking in him at the time, he said to the senior deacon, "I have a friend in Essex, a much younger man than I am; he will come and supply my place for you the two Sundays I am engaged here, as I am so poorly"; and they were quite willing that it should be so, seeing that his work was nearly done; for so it was. The Lord's day that he was appointed to preach at Heybridge to his old friends, he was dying, and in a few days his ransomed soul left its clay tenement for that bright mansion which Love had ordained for him.

(To be concluded)

BOOK REVIEWS

A Brief Compendium of Bible Truth, by Archibald Alexander; 220 pages; hardback; price \$25; published by Reformation Heritage Books, 2965 Leonard St. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525, U.S.A., and obtainable from the publishers and probably from Christian bookshops.

This book was first published in 1846. The author, Archibald Alexander, who lived from 1772-1851, was appointed Professor of Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary when it was founded in 1812, and continued in this position for thirty-nine years.

The original preface states that the volume comprises a brief system of theology intended for plain, common readers, avoiding technical phrases and abstruse disquisitions. This is a plain exposition of the doctrines of free grace based wholly on the holy Bible and the Westminster Confession of Faith.

The book is divided into thirty-eight short chapters, the first nine being headed: The Being of God; Personality and Perfection of God; The Holy Scriptures; Unity of God; Spirituality and Simplicity of the Divine Nature; Character of God; The Holy Trinity; Divinity of Christ; Personality of the Holy Spirit.

The publishers state on page ix that "a careful reading of this valuable compendium will more than repay today's reader for the time spent perusing its pages." Your reviewer fully agrees with this statement and recommends the book to our readers.

J.A.H.

Bethel Pulpit. A sermon by the Editor, preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton, is published each month, and is obtainable free of charge from Mrs. Alison A. Kingham, 11 Sutherland Place, Luton, LU1 3SY. It is twenty years ago this month since the first *Bethel Pulpit* sermon appeared.

FIVE WORDS

"I had rather speak five words with my understanding ... than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue" (1 Cor. 14. 19).

"Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2. 2)

Five *precious* words! My soul hangs on their worth!
 What mysteries, what gospel they set forth!
 Christ gave His life that sinners might be free:
 O wondrous grace, O love beyond degree!

Five *vital* words! To save the lost He came;
 No hope apart from Him, no other name.
 Eternal wrath was ours, but Jesus died;
 He vanquished hell when He was crucified.

Five *solemn* words! 'Twas sin that placed Him there;
 God's holiness could not the Saviour spare,
 Since He decreed to bear His people's sin,
 A cursèd death to die, their heaven to win.

Five *welcome* words to all who feel their need –
 By God's good Spirit may we truly heed –
 Although we merit hell, the Saviour died;
 For our salvation He was crucified.

Anon., August 1953

In prayer we must take no denial. If we have but a feeling sense of our wants, a Scripture warrant to go upon or *one* promise to plead, we must sue, argue, reason, plead, supplicate, intercede, confess, acknowledge, thank, bless, praise, adore, repeat, importune, observe, take hold of, and turn to advantage whatsoever may be of use to the soul. Sinners, sensible of their lost estate by nature, who feel their need and poverty, have many invitations, encouragements, precedents and promises. They have, under the teachings of the Holy Spirit, to plead and rely upon the covenant of Jehovah, the oath of God, the merits of Christ – and all His covenant engagements, undertakings and performances, the covenant characters He sustains, His incarnation and near relationship to them – together with all the glorious train of divine perfections found in the proclamation of the name of God to Moses (Exod. 34. 6, 7), for these all sweetly harmonise and brightly shine in Christ crucified, who has never once yet disappointed the hope of a penitent sinner, but has graciously said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." His promises, like Himself, are unchangeable, and this is one of them, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

Huntington

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
OCTOBER 2005

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

THE CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

Some thoughts on the 200th anniversary of Trafalgar Day, October 21st

We believe in “the Christian interpretation of history.” This is clearly taught in the Word of God. Things do not just happen. There is an Almighty God ordering all things according to the counsel of His will, and yet in no way the author of sin. Empires rise and fall, battles are won and lost, great men make their plans, and succeed or fail – and above it all God is in control.

How clearly this is taught in Scripture, especially in the history of Israel! Things seeming to take place by chance or according to the normal expectation of events – yet here and there the reminder that God is in control.

A marked example of this is Joshua chapter 10. Here we have Israel’s glorious victory over their enemies but “the Lord discomfited them ... with a great slaughter” (verse 10); “the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel” (verse 12); “the Lord fought for Israel” (verse 14).

Again, in Scripture some things which seem of vital importance are passed over in a few words, and other things that do not seem really to matter have a whole chapter devoted to them – especially the Lord’s intimate concern in the details of His people’s lives. One of the longest chapters in the Bible (Genesis 24) is the account of how a wife was found for Isaac (longer than the account of creation!) In Kings and Chronicles some great happenings are barely mentioned.

Which brings us to consider two events that took place exactly two hundred years ago this month – the one, one of the greatest events in English history; the other, unnoticed (but of interest to us).

The Battle of Trafalgar, fought on October 21st, 1805, was one of England’s most glorious naval victories. Under the command of Lord Nelson, England gained the supremacy of the seas for at least the following hundred years. Moreover, an end was put to any plans of Napoleon to invade and conquer England.

It is, of course, right that Trafalgar should be remembered and, as at the time, thanks given to God. Until comparatively recently October 21st was kept as Trafalgar Day, and every English boy and girl had to learn the words of Nelson’s stirring message to the English fleet at the

beginning of that momentous day: "England expects every man this day to do his duty."

About the same time a young, little known minister with his wife and three little girls was travelling from Leicestershire to Manchester (presumably by stage coach). In Manchester they were to set up their home, and the house they had to live in was almost falling down. The young man was William Gadsby, on his way to begin his thirty-eight years' pastorate at the Manchester Particular Baptist chapel.

All this, of course, was unknown to the world, and unnoticed in the press. But what remarkable results to the honour and glory of God and the good of His church here on earth! We think of preaching blessed to hundreds (if not thousands). We think of the noble stand for the truth and the old paths when many of the old Baptist churches were drifting away. Not least, we think of Gadsby's Hymnbook. In a word – if it is a correct expression – Gadsby's legacy.

So, "the Christian interpretation of history." God alone knows the difference of importance, in the light of eternity, of the defeat of Napoleon's fleet at Trafalgar and the beginning of Gadsby's ministry at Manchester.

CHRIST: WISDOM, RIGHTEOUSNESS, SANCTIFICATION AND REDEMPTION

*Sermon preached by J.H. Gosden, at Ebenezer Chapel, Hastings,
on April 4th, 1956.*

Text: "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1. 30, 31).

The apostle is writing not only to these particular Corinthian believers but, as he says in the second verse, to "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." He embraces all praying people who sincerely call upon the Lord's name, and he shows in this context where their life and their strength and their righteousness and their wisdom and their salvation are. It is all in the Lord, not in themselves.

But in order to understand this text personally and in experience, we must be brought down to nothingness in our own sense of things; and that is very solemn. There may be a good deal of talking about Christ, and some notions about Him, without *knowing* Him, without being united to Him; but if we are brought to the state expressed in the context it will

be a solemn yet a blessed thing, to fit us for Christ: "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are."

The process of bringing down, weakening, emptying out, crying folly on our wisdom and emptiness on our fulness, is a solemn process. Berridge says, "The Saviour empties whom He'll fill." We should like to be full of religion, and then parade a little veneer in the knowledge of Christ; but when God deals with His people He will bring them down, pull down every thought, every high thing, that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. O what a painful experience it is! And how, when people are being thus emptied out and shown what they are as sinful, weak, ignorant, hell-deserving, guilty, helpless souls, they wonder where the scene will end! But sooner or later a person is brought just to that place: he is nothing; he can do nothing; he can *be* nothing; he is just a lost sinner, and he needs a Saviour. We may be stuffed with religion and miss the whole point of salvation; but if we know these two things by the Holy Spirit, it will be good. If we know that we are sinners and have some apprehension of what a solemn thing it is to be a sinner against a holy God who cannot but condemn sin, and that we need a Saviour and a great one – if we know those two things, I say, we have a basis for our religion.

Previous to the text the purpose is expressed of God's thus dealing with His people: "That no flesh should glory in His presence." We are apt to glory in something of our own. It takes a great deal to bring us down from vain glory, independence, or at least thinking that we can partially contribute to our own salvation. But no, we must be brought right down, and then, O how thankful a person is to have a manifestation of Christ, to see by the light and teaching of the Spirit that all a lost sinner can need He possesses!

In a sense, a sinner, a guilty sinner, feels himself worse than if he had never been born. The wise man, Solomon, speaks of that in the Ecclesiastes, that an untimely birth is better than some cases. Perhaps some of you have felt under conviction – I have known in my early days what it has been to wish I had never been born, born to sin against God, to live in this world a depraved sinner and incapable of dispossessing myself of my being or of my obligations to God. That spells eternal ruin apart from Christ. O how solemn it is! You cannot get away from yourself. Most people are busy about other people's wickedness, and live in a kind of Pharisaic spirit; but the child of God, that is to say, the convicted sinner, is so absorbed at times with his own case as a guilty, hell-deserving sinner, he is just alone. "He sitteth alone ... because he

hath borne it upon him”; and yet feels it at times unbearable. O how to get away from self and from sin, how to escape the wrath to come, how to be made fit to meet God – these are the solemn enquiries of the soul.

Mercifully, the Spirit takes such people in hand. He takes them by His solemn conviction near to despair, but never lets them fall into despair, except despair of self; and then they feel they cannot do without Christ.

“Few, if any, come to Jesus,
Till reduced to self-despair.”

I believe that to be really true. There may be a good deal of flattery, a good deal of congratulation, a good deal of religious profession, without coming to Christ in solemn necessity.

But in the text the Holy Spirit by Paul declares that it is of God that these nonentities, these poor, base things, these “things that are not,” are made in Christ Jesus persons of some account. They have a being in Christ. Perhaps some of you understand that a little, that whereas you wished you had never had a being to sin against God and to incur His eternal wrath, when you have had an inkling of union to Christ and the benefits of His precious salvation, you have been thankful to have a being capable of enjoying that salvation and capable of being for the praise of God. O the difference! Mighty difference! “But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus.” It is God’s grace, God’s purpose, according to which He executes everything, that sinful mortals have union to Christ, are in Him by eternal union. Kent speaks of it beautifully:

“By covenant transaction and blood,
Says Jesus, My people are Mine.”

O, my friends, this union subsisted before we had a being, and yet it is manifested in time when we are well convicted of our lost state and then given to see that in Christ Jesus we have life that can never be lost.

“But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus.” It may be, and probably is, a serious question with some whether we have union to Him, whether we have any interest in Him at all, whether He is our Redeemer, whether we are chosen by God to obtain salvation through Him. But if we are convicted of our sin, and are shown who Jesus Christ is, and God’s appointment, one thing will be true, we shall be *after* union with Him, praying for it, longing to get contact and communion with Him, to receive from Him what He has to give – to give freely, to poor, lost, needy, undone, helpless souls. The Friend of sinners He is; and I believe a true believer, that is, one convicted and taught that Jesus Christ is sufficient, will not wait till he *knows* he has an interest in Christ. No, he will seek after Him, press his case before Him. Why, my friends, there is nowhere else to go! If we are fleeing from the wrath to come,

deprecating our sin, feeling the solemnity of our condition as guilty sinners, we cannot sit still, we cannot lie in sloth and expect something to happen! There will be a seeking after Him. Have not you found sometimes your heart going after Him, longing to know Him and to realise your interest in all His great salvation? "Of Him are ye *in Christ Jesus*."

The knowledge of being in Him, the assurance of union to Him, is a blessed thing; but there may be a union of desire, of sensible need, a union of affinity, a union that makes you feel at times you could from all things parted be, but never from Christ. You *must* have Him. This is the point: "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus." You stretch forth your hands unto Him, you seek Him wherever you hope you may find Him; in His Word, at the throne of grace, in the means of grace, if haply you may meet with Him and find reception from Him. That is a remarkable word of Christ's in the 6th of John. He quotes from Isaiah's prophecy: "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me." And coming is believing, and believing is coming. You *must* come, because you are lost without Him, and because He possesses all that you need. "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus."

"Who of God is made unto us wisdom." Now when you are convicted of your sin, really so, feeling the guilt of your sins, the weight of them, the darkness of them, and the hell-deserving character of them, and cannot dispossess yourself from them, and believe in the holiness and the justice of God, you will be at a stand. "How can I be saved? How can I get my nature changed? How can I be delivered from my guilt? How can I be made fit to stand before God? How can I escape His curse and eternal judgment?" There is no way that nature can provide or propound.

I remember most distinctly being there. I could not see how God, being what He is, infinite in holiness and purity, inflexible in justice, almighty in power, inescapable in His omniscience, and everlasting – I could not see how I could possibly escape His wrath, how He *could* save, bless, receive, such a one as myself. O what a state it was to be in! Like a derelict! It was like this with me, I wished I had never had a being, or never had a soul capable of such sin and of being lost. But the time came, blessed be God, when I saw – I hope it was by the light and life of the Spirit – how God could be what He is in all His glorious character of purity and holiness and justice, and yet how He could save such a sinner as myself. Only that; but it was a great thing to me. I was far from an assurance of being saved, but I saw how it was possible, and that was through Jesus Christ, in this mysterious way wherein the Lord Jesus is the wisdom of God.

In this chapter we read that Christ and Him crucified – His cross – is foolishness to the polite Greek, and a stumblingblock to the prejudiced Jew. The latter went about to establish a righteousness of his own. Well, God will kill that when He deals with you; He will make you see and feel that your righteousnesses are but “splendid sins,” and deserve hell as much as your actual transgressions. O but here is the wisdom of God in a mystery! Yes, the contrivance (to use a term of Bunyan’s) that God put into execution in sending His dear Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, in the fulness of the time appointed, to redeem those that were under the law and therefore under the curse. O, the wisdom that was manifested in this, the perfect mystery of it! “Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.” Have you seen the wisdom of God in this – inscrutable wisdom – in securing His character, in making a way whereby He could let out all His mighty love and grace and mercy and compassion toward those who deserve only the curse? O the wisdom of it!

If we could only get a glimpse into this mystery, the mystery of the substitutionary position and work and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, appointed by the Father, ordained before the foundation of the world, but revealed in these last times! Did you ever see an attraction here in the wisdom of God contriving this plan? He would not abrogate His law; He cannot deflect His justice. It is impossible for God to deny Himself. Where then can wisdom be found? Why, here, in the Substitute, in the incarnation of His eternal, co-equal Son; so that He who is God the Son became the Son of man, took our nature up into union with Himself, that He might His own self bear our sins in His own body on the tree, as Peter declares.

“Who of God is made unto us wisdom.” We can never fathom it. If we look a little into it, why, it will fill us with admiration, the goodness of God here in the exercise of this wisdom! He did not take an angel, but He took human nature (without sin) into union with His Person. We can never understand the truth of this, but we can believe it, and we can love it, and we shall, if the Lord reveals it to us; and, as shut up in our guilt and undone condition, we shall say, “There is all my trust. I have no hope anywhere else.” There is an appointed way, appointed by a holy God, in which justice and mercy, truth and righteousness and salvation, all are gloriously revealed and provided; a salvation suitable to lost people. “Who of God is made unto us wisdom.”

“And righteousness.” We must have, in order to our acceptance with God and entrance into heaven, a righteousness that is perfect. I am drawing on toward the end of my life, and am very concerned about a title and a fitness for heaven. We must have a title, we must have a fitness, and we cannot buy a title for ourselves, we cannot produce a fitness for ourselves; but our title and our fitness will be found in and

from the Lord Jesus: "Who of God is made unto us ... *righteousness*." This means that His whole life from His birth to His death was lived in order to provide a righteousness to cover guilty sinners. There is no other righteousness God will accept for justification, no other righteousness that exists that is perfect – God's own intrinsic righteousness excepted, which cannot be communicated. The intrinsic, essential righteousness of God belonging to the integrity of His character, this is incommunicable; but the righteousness that Christ wrought out is communicable, and it is communicated by imputation. O blessed truth! Think of it! The obedience of One, we read in the Romans, will constitute many righteous, even as one man's disobedience constituted many sinners (5. 19).

The doctrine of imputation is a sacred doctrine. Why, my friends, our hope of escaping hell, and of admittance into heaven, and fitness for heaven, depends on that truth; as it is written, "He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." And that included not only the sacrifice which He offered for sin, but His whole obedience to the law. He rendered a complete obedience. He did always those things that pleased God; and He did them perfectly, with a perfect human nature, and with all His mind and soul and strength; and the only one that ever did.

We read in the Galatians, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." If you look at that word soberly and seriously, with a view to eternity in your own case, how solemn it will be: "Continueth not in *all things*." Why, we have not continued in one thing! We have not once in our whole lives obeyed perfectly one point in the whole law. All our obedience together has not that merit that is necessary for acceptance for justification. No, we are brought off that. If you have any righteousness of your own to plead before the Lord, in that measure which you feel you have a righteousness that God can accept, in the same measure you reject Christ's. O but here is a substantial, a perfect, an infinitely-meritorious righteousness wrought out and brought in and laid up and possessed and imputed, counted the sinner's. "Christ is made of God unto us righteousness."

You cannot need more, but the great point with you and with me is this, to have that righteousness *on*, to have the assurance of the Spirit that we are justified freely by divine grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. But there it is! If we look inside and never look to Jesus Christ we shall sink. If you look inside for a righteousness of your own in order to go to God and to hope in His mercy, you will despair, or will be deceived if you think you have one. But Christ's is all-sufficient, substantial, a righteousness appointed by God, set forth to be the

propitiation for our sins; and He is made of God righteousness. And all His people seek to know and to possess Him in that particular, Jehovah our Righteousness (Jer. 23. 6).

“And sanctification.” Sanctification is very important. I know some people – good people – think that we should not think much of sanctification; justification is the chief consideration. But I believe the two points are inseparable. Whom God justifies by imputed righteousness, the same persons He will sanctify; and they feel their need of it. Christ is not in parts. You cannot divide Christ. But this will be a point in your heart and soul experience, there is not a single element, a single qualification, a single blessed grace that Christ has that you can dispense with. You must have Him *altogether*, and must have Him for sanctification. Holiness; separation. Christ prayed for His disciples in that wonderful seventeenth chapter of John, for four particulars. One of them was this, “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth.” Well, what is the Word of God? It is the written Word; it is the incarnate Word; and they are in all things alike. The Scriptures declare Christ. The knowledge of Christ in the heart formed there by the Holy Spirit is a sanctified knowledge. “Sanctify them through the knowledge of Christ.”

Now look: when the Lord Jesus visits your soul, when you are allowed to hold communion with Him, to get a glimpse of His beauty, a touch of His dying love, a rill of His holy peace in your conscience, what is the effect of that? It makes you holy. It separates. It makes sin hateful. It makes you long for *perfect* holiness. Christ is thus made sanctification. I wish we might walk with Him; I wish we might have more acquaintance with the Lord Jesus, so as to be more conformed to Him and know more what sanctification really means. Sanctification – why, when you have felt His love in your heart, and in all humility and trembling reverence have said to Him, “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee,” where was the world then? Where was self-importance then? Where were your covetous desires then, and your idols, and your lusts?

Sanctification; not sanctimoniousness. People may affect a kind of superior spirituality artificially, and it be nothing but sanctimoniousness, a piece of hypocrisy really; and you know the difference in your spirit. You will hate that sanctimoniousness. It will stink in your nostrils as it does in God’s. The Lord says that they are a stench in His nose who say, “Stand by thyself, come not near unto me, for I am holier than thou.” You will never say that when Christ is with you; but you *are* holier, and you are separated; not only separated from sin, but separated unto the Lord. His presence is like a pavilion, sequestering you from the noise and strife and lust and pomp and pride of this life, and from yourself.

That is the best part of sanctification. It separates a man from himself, raises him up above himself, his lusts and all the carnality of his mind.

Christ is made this. Did you ever feel His presence? We talk about the Lord's presence, perhaps without properly considering the solemnity of it. His presence creates an atmosphere. You can breathe it, a sweet, solemn, sacred, holy atmosphere, an atmosphere that is heavenly. It is like a foretaste of heaven sometimes; very rarely known, but it *is* known by the Lord's people. There is worship in the heart. You cannot get low enough, nor lift the Lord high enough. You love Him with love intense, and yet cannot love Him as fully as you would. Another thing it will do: it will make you long to be perfectly holy in the Lord's presence in heaven. O, it will mark you for heaven! The world and all its vanities – you will renounce them. “Who of God is made unto us ... sanctification.”

“And redemption.” Redemption; liberty. How solemn this is! How blessed this is! First of all, there is redemption by the blood of Christ, that great purchase price. O my dear friends, if the Lord makes this out to you in some little measure it will make you long to be for the Lord's glory; it will make you long to love Him all the days of your life: “Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” “That no flesh should glory in His presence.” No, you will not glory in yourself, but in Him, and in the great sacrifice that He made and the love that He manifested in that sacrifice. Redemption. Liberty, this is! He purchased His church, and they must go free. All the liberty that ever we have to serve God acceptably will be through Him and through His atoning death, and through a sense, in the conscience, of the purging efficacy of that blood which alone sets a person free from legal bondage to serve the living God. Liberty to approach God, liberty to call Him your own, liberty to pray, liberty to confide in Him, and liberty from the dread of dying.

Ah, we are dying people. There is no discharge in that war. None has power to retain the spirit. But if Christ is ours, if He bought us with His precious blood, if we are not our own, then when death comes it will be liberty, it will be final redemption. How different eternity is, in the view of it, in the soul of a person when under the law and guilty and bound, and when that person has a little sense of redeeming love in his heart! Then he wants the Lord, and says sometimes, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!” That liberty will be just this: “I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” If He has purchased us, if He is our Forerunner in heaven and our great Representative there, the day is coming when we shall be with Him and like Him. None can enter through those gates into the city but such as are perfectly holy. O how solemn! Nothing can enter that denies or that

makes a lie. Now that will be liberty, when the child of God is freed from sin, perfectly freed from sin, with God eternally shut in. *That* will be liberty! And in this life the sweetest liberty we can have is to be captivated to Christ, constrained by His love to own His sway. Do not some of you say in your heart, “O for a closer walk with God”? Have not you been made, some of you, really desirous, not only willing but desirous, to “go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach,” *esteeming* His reproach? His reproach is estimable. It betokens likeness to Himself.

May the Lord bless us, bless you, my friends, and myself, with a little inkling of what this text contains. I have only said a few very feeble things about it, and am ashamed of my poverty; but the richness of the text will enrich us if the Holy Spirit will lead us into it and give us a sense of interest in, and union to, the Lord Jesus.

HYPOCRITES AND CHRIST

By Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)

A hypocrite never embraces a whole Christ. He can never take up his full and everlasting rest, satisfaction and content in the Person of Christ, in the merits of Christ, in the enjoyment of Christ alone. No hypocrite did ever long and mourn after the enjoyment of Christ as the best thing in all the world. No hypocrite did ever prize Christ for a Sanctifier as well as a Saviour. No hypocrite did ever look upon Christ or long for Christ to deliver him from the power of his sins, as much or as well as to deliver him from wrath to come. No hypocrite can really love the Person of Christ or take satisfaction in the Person of Christ. The rays and beams of Christ’s glory have never warmed his heart. He never knew what bosom communion with Christ meant. A hypocrite may love to be healed by Christ, and to be pardoned by Christ, and to be saved by Christ; but he can never take any complacency in the Person of Christ. His heart never seriously works after union with Christ. The love of a sincere Christian runs much out to the Person of Christ. Heaven itself without Christ would be to such a soul but a poor thing, a low thing, a little thing, an uncomfortable thing, an empty thing. It is the Person of Christ that is the sparkling diamond in the ring of glory (Phil. 1. 21; 3. 7-10).

No hypocrite in the world is sincerely willing to receive Christ in all His offices and to close with Him upon gospel terms. The terms upon which God gives Christ in the gospel are these, viz., that we shall accept of a whole Christ with a whole heart (Matt. 16. 24).

Now, mark, a whole Christ includes all His offices; and a whole heart includes all our faculties. Christ as Mediator is King, Priest and Prophet; and so God the Father in the gospel gives Him. Salvation was too great and too glorious a work to be perfected and completed by any one office of Christ. Christ as a Prophet instructs us, as a Priest He redeems us and intercedes for us, and as a King, He sanctifies and saves us. The apostle hit it when he said, "Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1. 30). Consider Christ as our Prophet, and so He is made wisdom to us. Consider Him as our Priest, and so He is made righteousness and redemption to us. Consider Him as our King, and so He is made sanctification and holiness to us.

A hypocrite may be willing to embrace Christ as a Priest to save him from wrath, from the curse, from hell, from everlasting burning, but he is never sincerely willing to embrace Christ as a Prophet to teach and instruct him, and as a King to rule and reign over him. Many hypocrites may be willing to receive a Christ Jesus, who are not willing to receive a Lord Jesus. They may be willing to embrace a saving Christ, but they are not willing to embrace a ruling Christ, a commanding Christ: "We will not have this Man to reign over us" (Luke 19. 14). "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1. 11).

A hypocrite is willing to receive Christ in one office, but not in every office; and this is that stumbling-stone at which hypocrites stumble and fall and are broken in pieces. Certainly Christ is as lovely and as comely, as desirable and delightful, as eminent and excellent in one office as He is in another; and therefore it is a just and righteous thing with God that hypocrites that will not receive Him in every office should have no benefit by any one of His offices. Christ and His offices may be distinguished, but Christ and His offices can never be divided (1 Cor. 1. 13). Whilst many have been labouring to divide one office of Christ from another, they have wholly stripped themselves of any advantage or benefit by Christ.

Hypocrites love to share with Christ in His happiness, but they do not love to share with Christ in His holiness. They are willing to be redeemed by Christ, but they are not cordially willing to submit to the laws and government of Christ. They are willing to be saved by His blood, but they are not willing to submit to His sceptre. Hypocrites love the privileges of the gospel, but they do not love the services of the gospel, especially those that are most inward and spiritual.

But now a sincere Christian, he owns Christ in all His offices, he receives Christ in all His offices, and he closes with Christ in all His offices. He accepts of Him, not only as a Christ Jesus, but also as a Lord Jesus; he embraces Him, not only as a saving Christ, but also as a ruling

Christ. The Colossians received Him as Christ Jesus the Lord (Col. 2. 6); they received a *Lord* Christ as well as a *saving* Christ; they received Christ as a King upon His throne, as well as a sacrifice upon His cross. God the Father in the gospel tenders a whole Christ. We preach Christ Jesus the Lord; and accordingly, a sincere Christian receives a whole Christ, he receives Christ Jesus the Lord. A hypocrite is all for a saving Christ, for a sin-pardoning Christ, for a soul-glorifying Christ, but regards not a ruling Christ, a reigning Christ, a commanding Christ, a sanctifying Christ; and this at last will prove his damning sin.

UNION TO CHRIST ESSENTIAL

By Edward Polhill (1622-1694)

Those who are not in union with Christ had need to consider their condition; what poor forlorn creatures are they! What a world of guilt is there lying at their door! What omissions, commissions, ignorances, presumptions, impieties, iniquities, what smothered light, abused love, buried talents, broken promises, have they to answer for! For these things, what black clouds and storms of wrath hang over their heads! What dooms and fearful curses doth the broken law pronounce against them! At death and in the judgment, what will they do? How will they appear before the holy God, or what can they plead or say why His wrath should not be poured out upon them? May they be saved without a Saviour, or by a neglected one? Will the merciful and mighty Jesus deliver those who would have none of Him? May His glorious satisfaction cover those who are none of His members? or His precious atonement discharge those that would never receive it? Will the law spare those who reject the gospel? or the dreadful curse pass over those who have not the blood of the covenant sprinkled upon them?

It cannot be. Not being in union with Christ, their condition is as forlorn as if there were no Christ, no sacrifice or atonement, no gospel or promises at all. The wrath of God abides on them: there is but a little moment, a little span of life between them and the bottomless pit. As soon as death blows out their candle, they are in utter darkness. It may be a matter of just wonder, how it is possible that they should have any rest or quiet of mind in such a dreadful condition. The very thought of the wrath to come is enough to damp all the joy and comfort of their lives.

Again, would they but dive into their own hearts, it would be a weary thing to them, to see their immortal spirits lie, as they do, in ruins and spiritual desolations; to have minds, and no practical light in them;

wills, and no holy rectitude in them; to have joy and love, and none for Christ; hatred and sorrow, and none for sin! It would be grievous in their eyes to see their precious souls lie in the turpitude and pollution of sin, in a sink of pleasure, or a cave of covetousness, or some other lust, which, like an unclean place, miserably defiles it whilst it abides therein.

In such a doleful state, what help or relief is there but in Christ? Is He not the great Repairer of breaches? Is it not He that [by His Spirit] sets up the divine image and all its furniture in the soul? Is not He the only one that cleanses us from the stains and turpitudes of sin? There is salvation in no other but in Him alone. Were but men awakened, they would never rest in a Christless condition; the scores of guilt in conscience, the wrath of God hanging over their heads, the forlorn and desperate state of their own souls, the wretched pollutions and defilements which they lie under, would make them cry out for Christ: "O, give us Christ or else we die! Nothing can wash out our guilt but His atoning blood; nothing can cover us from wrath but His glorious satisfaction; nothing can purge out our stains and set our hearts in order, but His Spirit." The fearful condition of being without Christ would prompt them to breathe and endeavour after union with Him, as the only necessary and desirable thing in the world.

Those who are in union with Christ, through grace, should carry themselves in a just decorum to that blessed state. How should they study and admire the transcendent excellencies of their Head! What a glorious and incomparable Person is He! Creatures are but vanity, the whole world is but a poor nothing in comparison with Him. What a sight is God in human flesh, in whom the distance between God and man is, as it were, filled up in a wonderful incarnation! How infinite is that love which moved Him to come down into a human nature, to stand in it under the rules of His own law; nay, to bleed and die upon the cross to make full satisfaction for the sin of the world! How should those that are in Him stand and adore Him! What raptures and ecstasies of affection are due to Him, who is over all beauty? With what joys and triumphs of faith should they look upon His precious blood, which cheers the heart of God and man! Here they may lie down in ease and rest; no fears of death or hell shall disturb them.

And what are the rich anointings and over-measures of the Spirit which are upon Him! How vast an ocean of grace is He! What wonders are to be seen in Him! Those who are in Him have reason to stand and admire at the continual elapses [outpourings] of the Spirit, and supplies of grace from Himself! Israel could sing to an earthly fountain: "Spring up, O well!" How should Christians joy in the fountain of grace, and say, "Flow out, O infinite well, let thy streams make us glad for ever!" What precious thoughts should they have of Him! What firm adherences

of will unto Him! What total dependencies upon Him! What pure, intimate affections towards Him! How should their love feed and feast upon the delicious suavities and plenitudes in Him!

Earthly things should be but as so many beautiful shadows and gilded nothings. Their affections should be entirely set upon Him as the most amiable Object of all; carnal self should be left and forsaken, that they may be swallowed up in Him. How should they study and earnestly affect to resemble Him! His will should be theirs; theirs should be broken in pieces, that it may be made one with His. His mind should be in them, and theirs should have pure aims at His glory. They should never think that they have enough of His image, but every day endeavour to have more lively stamps and impresses of it upon their souls.

Nay, they should not rest in a mere *interne* assimilation to Him, but strive after an *externe* imitation of Him; to talk and act, and live as He did. As there is one Spirit in Him and them, so there should be the same steps in both. When they go about anything, they should ask their hearts, Would He if on earth do so? Do we herein imitate Him who is the grand copy and idea of virtue? To hunt after the world, or drown in sensuality, or boil in hatred or malice, is not to act as mystical parts of the great Exemplar. And how should they seek communion with Him in duties, providences, creature comforts! Christ alone should be the matter of their fruition; all other things should be subservient to Him, nothing should be good to them but what tends to Him.

And how should they endeavour to give all content to Him! The least dalliances with sin are a grief to Him. Physicians tell us that all grief in the body proceeds from the solution of the *continuum*. It holds good in His members; nothing is more grievous to Him than to have them backslide or be out of joint. If they should fall off from the mysteries to their own reason, or from His precepts to their own will, or from His righteousness to their own works, it would be a thing no less displeasing to Him than unbecoming to them. And how should they labour to find all content in Him! He is a King for power, a Husband for love, a Foundation for support, a Priest for atonement, a Head for influence. Nay, He is All in all. It is safe to be under His protection, sweet to be in His embraces, sure to be upon His foundation, comfortable to have peace by His blood; excellent to have continual supplies and emanations of grace from Him.

Nay, to have *Him* is to have all things; all who are in Him have reason to rest satisfied in Him and to begin that song of the Lamb which they shall ever be singing in heaven to Him: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood ... to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

SOVEREIGN GRACE

By Abraham Booth (1734-1806)

Grace, in our text, is compared to a sovereign. Now a sovereign, considered as such, is invested with regal power and the highest authority. Grace, therefore, in her beneficent government, must exert and manifest sovereign power – must supersede the reign, and counteract the mighty and destructive operations of sin, or she cannot bring the sinner to eternal life. For the Holy Spirit has compared sin to a sovereign, whose reign terminates in death.

As *sin* appears, clothed in horrid deformity and armed with destructive power, inflicting temporal death, and menacing eternal flames, so *Grace* appears on the throne, arrayed in the beauties of holiness, and smiling with divine benevolence; touched with feelings of the tenderest compassion, and armed with all the magnificence of invincible power. Fully determined to exert her authority and gratify her compassion, under the conduct of infinite wisdom, to the everlasting honour of inflexible justice, inviolable veracity and every divine perfection – by rescuing the condemned offender from the jaws of destruction; by speaking peace to the alarmed consciences of damnable delinquents; by restoring to apostate creatures and vile miscreants a supreme love to God and delight in the ways of holiness and finally, by bringing them safe to everlasting honour and joy. In a word, the heart of this mighty sovereign is compassion itself: her looks are love, her language is balm to the bleeding soul, and her arm salvation. Such a sovereign is *Grace*. Those who are delivered by her must enjoy a complete salvation. Those who live under her most benign government must be happy indeed.

Divine grace, as reigning in our salvation, not only appears, but appears with majesty; not only shines, but triumphs; providing all things, freely bestowing all things necessary to our eternal happiness. Grace does not set our salvation on foot by accommodating its terms and conditions to the enfeebled capacities of lapsed creatures, but begins, carries on, and completes the arduous work. Grace, as a sovereign, does not rescue the sinner from deserved ruin, furnish him with new abilities, and then leave him, by their proper use, to resist the tempter, to mortify his lusts, to attain those holy qualities, and perform those righteous acts, which render him fit for eternal happiness, and give him a title to it. No; for if the province and work of grace were circumscribed in this manner, things of the first importance to the glory of God and the felicity of man would be left in the most uncertain and perilous situation. And, admitting the possibility of any sinner being saved in such a way, there would be ample scope for the exertions of spiritual pride, and much room

for boasting; which would be diametrically contrary to the honour of the Most High, and frustrate the noble designs of grace.

This matchless favour, far from being satisfied with laying the foundation, rears the superstructure also. It not only settles the preliminaries, but executes the very business itself. The Pharisee in the parable made his acknowledgments to preventing and assisting grace: for, "God, I thank Thee," was his language. It is evident, however, that his views of grace were very contracted, and his hopes arising from it very deceitful. Would we then view grace as reigning, we must consider it as the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end of our salvation, that the unrivalled honour of that greatest of all works may be given to *the God of all grace*.

Having taken this general view of reigning grace, I would now ask, What think you, reader, of this wonderful favour? Is it worthy of God? Is it suitable to your case? Or know you not that you are by nature under the guilt and dominion of sin? Of sin, that dreadful sovereign; of sin, that worst of tyrants. *Sin reigns*, says the apostle, and the end of its reign, where the sovereignty of grace does not interpose, is eternal death. Can you sleep away your time, and dream of being finally happy, while under the power of so malignant a sovereign? Shall the toys and trifles of a transitory world amuse, when your *soul*, your immortal *all*, is at stake? If so, how lamentable your condition! how dreadful your state! May you awake, arise, and bow the knee to divine grace, O stubborn rebel, while she holds out the golden sceptre of pardon and of peace! Acknowledge her supremacy, submit to her government, before justice ascend the throne and vengeance launch her bolts. For then an eternal bar will lie against every application for mercy, though arising from the most pressing want.

Or, if awake in your conscience, do you think it possible to effect your own deliverance? Alas! you are entirely without strength to perform any such thing; and grace was never intended as an auxiliary to help the weak, but well-disposed, to save themselves. The mercy of God and the gospel of Christ were never designed to assist and reward the righteous, but to relieve the miserable and save the desperate – to deliver those who have no other assistance, nor any other hope. Were you acquainted with your abject vassalage, were you convinced by the Spirit of truth, that there is no possible way of escape but by reigning grace, then would you cry for help, and then the relief that grace affords would be *all your salvation, and all your desire*.

If, on the other hand, you are burdened with sin and harassed by clamorous fears of being cast into hell; if, sensible of your native depravity, the multiplied iniquities of your life, the many shameful defects attending your best services, and your present absolute

unworthiness, you are ready to sink in despondency, O remember that *grace* has erected her throne! This forbids despair. For her wonderful throne is erected, not on the ruins of justice, not on the dishonour of the law, but, on the *blood of the Lamb*.

The inconceivably perfect obedience, and the infinitely meritorious death of the Son of God, form its mighty basis. Here grace is highly exalted: here grace appears in state, dispensing her favours and showing her glory. To such a benevolent and condescending sovereign, the basest may have free access. By such a powerful sovereign the most various, multiplied and pressing wants may be relieved with the utmost ease and greatest alacrity. Remember, disconsolate soul, that the name, the nature, the office of *grace enthroned* loudly attest that the greatest unworthiness and the most profligate crimes are no bar to the sinner in coming to Christ for salvation, in looking to sovereign favour for all that he wants. Nay, they demonstrate that the unworthy and sinful are the *only* persons with whom grace is at all concerned. This is amazing! This is delightful!

Ho! all ye children of want and sons of wretchedness! Hither ye may come with the utmost freedom. Be it known to you, be it never forgotten by you, that Jehovah considered your indigent case, and designed your complete relief, when He erected this wonderful throne. Your names are not omitted in the heavenly grant: nay, ye are the *only* persons that are blessed with a right of access to this mercy-seat. Did sinners more generally know their state, and the glorious nature of grace as *exalted in majesty*, how would the throne of this mighty sovereign be crowded! – crowded, not by persons adorned with fine accomplishments but with *the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind*. With longing hearts and uplifted hands, big with expectation and sure of success, they would throng her courts. Thither they would flee, as a *cloud* for number, and as *doves* for speed; for there is provision made to supply all their wants.

As persons of all ranks and of every character are equally destitute of any righteous or valid plea for admission into the eternal kingdom, so, feeling their want of spiritual blessings, they have equally free access to this munificent sovereign, and the same ground to expect complete relief. Here, and in this respect, there is no difference between the devout professor and the abandoned profligate, the chaste virgin and the infamous prostitute. For, being all criminals, and under the same condemnation, they have not the smallest gleam of hope, except what shines upon them in that compassionate proclamation which is issued from the throne of grace by the eternal Sovereign (Isa. 55. 1-3; Matt. 11. 28; John 6. 37, 7. 37; Rev. 22. 17). But, as that proclamation is expressive of the freest favour and the richest grace, including offenders of the worst characters, publishing pardon for sins of the deepest dye,

and all ratified by veracity itself, it affords sufficient encouragement to the vilest wretch that lives, who is willing to owe his all to divine bounty, without hesitation to receive the heavenly blessing, and with gratitude to rejoice in the royal donation. “Yes, Thine it is, O sovereign Grace, to raise the poor from the dunghill, and the needy out of the dust! Thine it is to set them on thrones of glory, and to number them among the princes of heaven.”

Remember this, my soul, and be this thy comfort; and may the Lord enable both the author and the reader to see eye to eye the riches of *reigning grace!*

PSALM 126

By David Dickson (1583-1662)

Dickson belongs to the covenanting times, times of persecutions in Scotland

This is the church’s song of thanksgiving for her delivery from the captivity of Babylon, wherein first the greatness of the mercy is set down (verses 1-3); then a prayer to God for enlarging the benefit, by making many embrace the promise of delivery (verse 4); and thirdly, an encouraging consolation to such as had returned or should return from Babylon to their own land (verses 5, 6).

“When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad” (verses 1-3).

In the thanksgiving the mercy is magnified; first, because it was above all their expectation (verse 1); secondly, because it not only rejoiced God’s people, but also convinced the heathen of God’s power for, and goodness toward His people (verse 2); thirdly, because it was in itself a mercy worthy to be praised and rejoiced for (verse 3). Whence learn,

1. As the Lord sometimes giveth evidence of His justice in afflicting His church, so also sometimes He giveth evidence of His mercy to His people by delivering, restoring and comforting them, as this Psalm holdeth forth.

2. Whosoever be the instruments of the delivery and consolation of the church, the Lord will so order matters as He shall be seen to be the Worker of the work Himself; therefore it is said here, “When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion.”

3. The performance of God's promises is more glorious than the believer can perceive or apprehend before he see it: "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream."

4. The delivery and consolation of God's church is no less matter of joy and gladness and praising God, than their affliction is of sorrow: "Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing."

5. In the delivery of the church the Lord usually works so evidently for His people that their adversaries are forced to acknowledge it: "Then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them."

6. Inward joy in God, and outward acknowledgment of God's working for His people, are the duty of every true member of the church, and are all which can be done at the first receipt of the mercy by way of thankfulness: "The Lord hath done great things for us."

7. There is a special eminence in the Lord's working for His people, above what He worketh in governing the rest of the world: "The Lord hath done great things," say both the heathen and the church.

8. There is this great difference between the praise which the heathen are forced to give to God, and that which the Lord's people heartily offer Him. The one speaketh as having no interest or share in the mercy; the other speak as they for whom the mercy is intended, and wherein they have their portion with others: "The Lord hath done great things for them," say the heathen; but, "He hath done great things for us," say the Lord's people.

"Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south" (verse 4).

From the prayer, learn,

1. The promise and opportunity given of a mercy is one benefit, and the embracing of the promise and taking the opportunity to make use of it are another benefit. Many have the one who receive not the other, as many had the liberty of returning from the captivity of Babylon who made no use thereof, but preferred the ease and pleasures of Babylon to the prerogatives of Zion, as this prayer importeth.

2. It is no less mercy to give people a heart to embrace and make use of promised mercy than it is to purchase the means and proclaim the promise of it in their audience, as this prayer importeth.

3. Such as have found grace to embrace the promise of God's mercy should pity and pray for others, that they may find the like mercy also: "Turn again our captivity, O Lord."

4. As the restoration of the church is no less comfortable than is the making of a river run in a dry land, so is the one no less possible to God than the other: "Turn again our captivity ... as the streams in the south," or drouthy lands.

“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (verses 5 and 6).

From the encouraging consolation of all the Lord’s afflicted people, learn,

1. As the Lord hath appointed harvest to follow the seed-time, so hath He appointed the consolation of His own church to follow after their afflictions. This the similitude importeth.

2. As the husbandman hath first toiling, labour and great expenses, and a time to endure in patience till he find the fruit of his labours, so fareth it with God’s children, who may be in great grief for a time before they find the good of religion. This also the similitude holdeth forth. There is a difference between the husbandman and the Lord’s afflicted child. The husbandman may have an ill harvest, but the child of God afflicted, and using the means, shall never have an ill harvest; his labour shall not be in vain in the Lord: his sorrow shall be turned into joy, and his fruit shall be multiplied to him abundantly. For, *“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”* His consolation shall be sweeter than his affliction was bitter.

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

*A few thoughts by Jesse Delves on Revelation 19. 10:
“Worship God,” 1955*

Worship is a sacred privilege, and to those who are quickened into life and taught of God, there is no exercise more sacred than worship.

We may attend many services, and observe an outward form, right and good in its place, without any spiritual worship. But when one is favoured to worship in spirit and in truth, there is a sweet gathering up. In a sense, earth is left behind. The “thick clay” and the many things that so often encumber and burden our spirits are lost sight of for a few moments, and we have contact with God. It is sweet to worship! Sometimes I hope I have had a few minutes of worship in my life. O the sacredness, the sweetness of communion with God! A most sacred privilege! The Trinity is here, as the blessed Object of worship: the Holy Spirit in His sweet and holy unction, the Lord Jesus Christ in His glorious Person and work, and the eternal Father, the Fountain of all grace. Here are the Three that bear record in heaven. O the beauty and glory of the Trinity! I believe the Lord made me a Trinitarian in my very soul in a few minutes one memorable night in my life, which I could never have known in any other way but by the sweet manifestation, I

hope, of each blessed Person to my soul. What a mercy to feel a broken heart for sin, to enjoy the healing balm of the precious atonement, and to fall before the Lord worshipping Him!

The Scriptures give many instances of worship; some have relation to matters of providence, answered prayer, as in the case of Abraham's servant (Gen. 24). Sometimes that record has been very sweet. Abraham's servant, realising his great responsibility in going forth to seek a wife for his master's son, sought the Lord's guidance and asked for a sign. In a striking way the Lord granted him an answer to his prayer, to confirm him that He had brought him to the place where he might find a wife for his master's son. But when the answer was given, the good man was so affected that he "bowed down his head, and worshipped the Lord." Have you ever done that? It would be a favour to creep under a hedge or crawl into a ditch and thus worship the Lord! There is no sweeter enjoyment to a true believer in Jesus.

Then there is the case of the blind man (John 9). The Lord restored his sight, and eventually he was cast out of the synagogue. The Lord went to him and said, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" and he answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" And the Lord said, "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee." Then he said, "Lord, I believe," and he *worshipped* Him. Do you know anything of this in a spiritual way?

I think I shall not forget the case of the women who had been at the sepulchre, and were instructed by an angel to go and tell the disciples that Jesus was risen from the dead. On their way the Lord met them and said, "All hail!" and they came and held Him by the feet and *worshipped* Him. In reading that many years ago, the Lord so blessed it to my soul, and made a living Christ so real to me, that it seemed as though I was with them in that worship. It is sweet to have a moment of worship! But I would just make a reference to outward worship.

The Lord has appointed the means of grace, which we as a denomination observe as helped and enabled, and we call it the public worship of God. But is there not a distinction to be drawn between this, and that inward, sweet, real, humbling exercise of faith and love? At the same time I believe there are occasions when inward worship accompanies the outward ordinances. Sometimes in preaching, are there not occasions, though perhaps comparatively rare, in which a minister feels a sacred liberty and unction, when the gospel is made precious, so that while he is preaching, he worships? Preaching the Word is one of the most sacred employments when Christ is formed in the heart the hope of glory, and the mouth is opened to speak a little to others of the precious gospel. These occasions may not be frequent, but my ministerial friends and brethren will understand me. We know much

bondage and darkness, but are there not also times when in discharging our labours, we get just a *glimpse of Him*, which turns our captivity as the streams in the south?

Then take the singing of God's praises. Often toward the end of the Psalms, we are exhorted to sing the praises of God; and the Apostle Paul, writing to the Colossians, speaks of teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts unto the Lord.

What is worship? It is adoration. We are before the infinite God, poor, sinful worms. Sometimes I have been amazed in my very soul that a guilty sinner should ever be allowed to approach the Majesty of heaven; and yet so it is by and through the inconceivable sufferings of our great Redeemer. The two parties, so opposite, meet together, so to speak, at Calvary, and there is worship. It is sweet sometimes to sing His praises, is it not? And this should be graciously observed, and conducted reverently and becomingly. "God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding."

But we may sing many hymns without worship. I sometimes like to think of one Lord's day morning in our little chapel. We began to sing hymn 20 (Gadsby's), and when we came to that verse:

"But lo, He leaves those heavenly forms;
The Word descends and dwells in clay,
That He may hold converse with worms,
Dressed in such feeble flesh as they,"

it broke me down, and I believe I had just a moment of worship. That is what I mean.

Sometimes worship is given under some injury, reproach, or false accusation, or when the Lord appears to one in trouble and distress, and touches the heart with a sense of His mercy and love. I remember my late pastor [J.K. Popham] relating an instance of a person in Brighton who constantly sought to injure his character and his ministry. Hearing that this person was very ill, and it being suggested that the minister should visit him, he said to himself, "He has injured me; if he wants me, let him send for me." Immediately this came: "I forgave thee *all that debt*." Then he said, "I must go and see him." There is no voice like the Lord's voice. Forgiveness produces humility, liberty and worship.

Sometimes there is a little worship in hearing too. I hope some here have known occasions when our souls have worshipped in hearing the gospel preached. There is also the solemn exercise of public prayer. At prayer meetings where the Spirit of the Lord is, there may sometimes be a humbling, sacred sense of communion with God: an unction pervading the spirit and the sweetness of the truth flowing into the heart. Some

prayers have, as it were, gathered us up, taken us away from ourselves, and brought a little sacred worship.

There is time but to mention the sacred ordinances of the Lord's house. We often observe them, but O when – and this may not be often, but when our hearts are touched, and faith has a single eye in receiving the broken bread and the wine, when a suffering Christ is seen by faith, then there is a little worship. When we thus partake, it brings us near to heaven in soul feeling, makes us ashamed of ourselves and our guilty sins, and yet makes the Lamb of God unspeakably precious. The Lord grant us a religion like this, as expressed by Toplady:

“Object of my first desire,
Jesus crucified for me;
All to happiness aspire,
Only to be found in Thee.”

THE HAPPY DEATH OF THOMAS GOODWIN

In February 1679, a fever seized him, which in a few days put an end to his life. In all the violence of it he discoursed with that strength of faith and assurance of Christ's love, with that holy admiration of free grace, with that joy in believing, and such thanksgivings and praises, as extremely moved and affected all that heard him....

He rejoiced in the thoughts that he was dying, and going to have a full and uninterrupted communion with God. “I am going,” said he, “to the three Persons with whom I have had communion. They have taken me; I did not take Them. I shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye; all my lusts and corruptions I shall be rid of, which I could not be here; those croaking toads will fall in a moment.” And mentioning those great examples of faith, Hebrews 11, “All these,” said he, “died in faith. I could not have imagined I should ever have had such a measure of faith in this hour; no, I could not have imagined it. My bow abides in strength. Is Christ divided? No, I have the whole of His righteousness; I am found in Him, not in my own righteousness, which is of the law, but in the righteousness which is of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. Christ cannot love me better than He doth. I think I cannot love Christ better than I do. I am swallowed up in God.”

The Puritan Dr. Thomas Goodwin (not to be confused with Thomas Godwin of Godmanchester) was a highly esteemed minister and writer, and a favourite of J.C. Philpot.

CHRIST ONLY

An extract from Samuel Rutherford (c.1600-1661)

Let Christ fare well, suppose I should eat ashes. I know He must be sweet Himself, when His cross is so sweet. And it is the part of us all, if we marry Himself, to marry the crosses, losses and reproaches also, that follow Him; for mercy followeth Christ's cross. His prison, for beauty, is made of marble and ivory; His chains that are laid on His prisoners are golden chains; and the sighs of the prisoners of hope are perfumed with comforts, the like whereof cannot be bred or found on this side of sun and moon.

Follow on after His love, tire not of Christ; but come in and see His beauty and excellency, and feed your soul upon Christ's sweetness. This world is not yours, neither would I have your heaven made of such metal as mire and clay. Ye have the choice and wail [selection] of all lovers in heaven or out of heaven, when ye have Christ, the only delight of God His Father. Climb up the mountain with joy and faint not; for time will cut off the men who pursue Christ's followers. Our best things here have a worm in them. Our joys besides God, in the inner half, are but woes and sorrows. Christ, Christ is that which our love and desires can sleep and rest safely upon.

Now, the very God of peace establish you in Christ. Help a poor prisoner with your prayers, and entreat that our Lord would be pleased to visit me with a sight of His beauty in His house, as He hath done sometimes.

BROUGHT INTO THE FOLD

My dear Brother – Have you lost your pen, or your heart? or are you sick, or fainting? Try to overcome it all. I have kept looking till my eyes have failed; now I am enquiring.

But I want to tell you a little story, viz: For a long time there have been lambs bleating about the fold, and running round the fence. The old sheep have been anxious to have them in the fold along with them; but they could not let them in of themselves; but they have kept telling the Shepherd about their bleating and wailing cry and anxious look, till at last He must have taken special notice of them, and pitied their case when He heard their cry. For the Shepherd came suddenly and surprisingly, opened the door, and let three of them into the fold last night at 7 p.m; and one of the under-shepherds, Wm. Schofield by name, washed [baptised] them well, and blessed them in the name of the Lord,

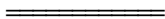
and they sang some of the songs of Zion, and RUACH (Christ) played the music; and to my thinking, it was a grand entertainment. Some of the elder sheep seemed affected in the heart and eyes, and some of the younger ones too. But, bless you, after the meal of pure Bread (Christ), from the finest of the wheat, and the rich wine of the grape (Christ again), everything was beautiful and glorious; so that we had a high day, and the joy of the Lord was our strength.

Now I shall conclude by wishing you peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, and much of His felt presence and power, especially when you go to that honoured place, the Grove, and more especially when you come to our little hill of Zion at Haydock; there you will see the newly gathered ones; and I hope we may have the presence and blessing of the Triune Jehovah. God bless you, Brother, and your dear wife.

J. Turton, "Lone Sparrow"

To Mr. G. Alexander

Those who value *Turton's Pillar*, the autobiography of James Turton (1839-1916), will be interested to read this typically quaint letter.



THROUGH MANY DANGERS

*The autobiography of Isaac Lewis (1823-1896), for over twenty years
pastor at Staplehurst, Kent
(Concluded from page 290)*

The time came for me to pay a visit to the friends at Staplehurst, and when I arrived I found myself in a strange place, and not a person I knew. It is true I had the address where to go, and at last I found it, and was kindly received by the mistress of the house. I had some tea, and soon went to bed, and from the bottom of my heart I wished I had never set foot in the place. But so it was, and could not be altered. The morning came and I was miserable and wretched, and was afraid I had done wrong in coming. And while pacing up and down the garden, the mistress of the house came out to me and said, "The deacon is coming to see you," and with that she left me. I followed and I had some strange thoughts before I reached the deacon. When we met we greeted each other by name, and he bade me God speed in the name of the Lord, and left me.

My first text, if I mistake not, was out of Psalm 145. 11: "They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power"; and I do believe the Holy Ghost accompanied it with divine power into the hearts of some, which brought a love to the speaker; and a real union was

formed that evening in sweet communion with my friend the senior deacon.

I supplied for them my two Lord's days, and was asked to give them as many days as I could the next year; and I did so. And as soon as this was done, my prayer ceased for the Lord to open a way for my leaving my native place; and some people might be led to ask if I had any intimation from God that that would be my future sphere of labour.

At that time I had no desire of settling over the people at Staplehurst. I believe it was about the third time of my coming to Staplehurst that, on the Monday morning at my lodgings, I awoke about five o'clock. As soon as my eyes were open such a powerful, feeling sense of the love, mercy and goodness of God in Christ Jesus dropped into my soul that I wept and praised His precious and blessed name that ever He should in so unexpected a time and way come to me, such a vile, sinful, ill and hell-deserving wretch as I. O how grace humbles a poor sinner into the dust of self-abasement and self loathing! O how I hated even the garments spotted by the flesh, and how the love of God in a poor sinner's heart softens and crumbles him, and draws out the soul in love to Jesus Christ! I truly thought my soul would have burst the bonds of the old tabernacle and flown into the everlasting embrace of my precious Lord Jesus. Truly He is precious to those who believe: and I did believe with all my heart that He died for me, that His blood had atoned for all my sins, and that He had wrought out a righteousness to cover my poor, naked soul. Truly the language of the poet suited me well:

“And lest the shadow of a spot
Should on my soul be found,
He took the robe the Saviour wrought,
And cast it all around.”

What a blessed reality there is in vital godliness felt and known in the hearts of God's elect! This is not the child of fancy, which so many are satisfied with. Those very characters are soon offended with a man if he contends for the power of truth upon the heart by the work of the eternal Spirit. Whenever this work is begun by the Holy Ghost, the outward walk and conduct in the world and in the churches of God will be in sweet accordance with the rule laid down in the Word of God. The Lord Jesus says, The tree shall be known by its fruit. And again, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.” While the grace of our God brings sweet and happy deliverance to the *us*, who are the election of grace, all the men of the world, whether in open profanity or in a dead profession, only see the outside; but the *us* receive an internal

application; and this produces corresponding fruits without, as the great Head of the church said in the days of His flesh: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

When the power of this sweet visit had in some measure abated, I began to consider what it all could mean; for I find that the Lord does not give those sweet and blessed visits for nothing. No. There is something to be done or to be endured. My soul was led out in prayer to the Lord that He would make known to me His mind and will. With that I turned to the written Word, and where I opened the Book I read; which was 1 Samuel 16. 7-12: "And he sent, and brought him in." When it came to the last clause of the verse a sweet anointing came into my heart with the word: "And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he." No man had any hand in this business in bringing it about; and I am quite sure no man shall make it null and void. Though a Saul may cast a javelin at me, he will surely miss his mark. Why I say so is because David's God is my God, and He has given me His word as my support: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." And truly I felt, as much as David did, that God had anointed me over the people at Staplehurst.

This people had been looking out for a man to go in and out before them, and sometimes they thought, like good old Samuel, that surely the Lord's anointed is before us, arise and anoint him. But they could not get the anointing oil to come down. No. Not because they were not brethren; for I believe they were, and far exceeded the poor fisherman in gifts and appearance and grace. Man looketh at the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart, and God's choice often widely differs from man's; for He has chosen the base things, and the foolish things, and things that are not.

O what a condescending stoop for that great God that formed the universe by His wisdom, and spake all things into being by the word of His power, should ever stoop to pick up such a nothing as I am. But truly, He does work like a God, and will not be brought under any obligation to His creatures. We are the clay, He the great Potter. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." And surely there can be nothing in this poor, dunghill sinner, either position, place or birth, to induce the Almighty to favour and honour him so. No; nothing but a further display of His wisdom and power towards the objects of His love and pity. "Yea, He loved the people"; and it is marvellous in our eyes that He will raise this poor, despicable outcast and downcast one to inherit a throne of glory that shall never fade away; while the proud, lofty monarch of earth our God will cast down into the depths of never-ending misery and woe:

“O to grace how great a debtor,
Daily I’m constrained to be!
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.”

The thing was of the Lord. I was fully assured of it from the power I felt in my own soul. From this time I had to watch the hand of God in the hearts of the people; and I soon found that their minds were exercised about the same thing. And when in the house of one of the members, they put the question to me, whether I had any thoughts of settling over them, I tried to waive the subject; but all to no purpose. “Yes,” or, “No,” she must have, so at last I told this member that I was as sure I should be over this people as I was sitting in her house. A church meeting was soon called to ascertain the minds of the members; their call for me to become their pastor was unanimous; and in due time I came, according to the call of God and His church at Staplehurst. And I must believe, at times, that I am in the right place; though sometimes I think I am altogether wrong; and have had many thoughts of running clean away from the work. But I know that I cannot run away from trouble; for in the world we have and must have trouble. The trouble generally comes the wrong way and at the wrong time. The Almighty is pleased to drop the trouble on to the tenderest place, and keep it there till it has done its work; and then He gives us grace to receive it, and acknowledge that His strokes have been fewer and lighter than our crimes. Then we can say, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

I must say a little respecting us as a church and people. Our chapel, I found, began to want repairing, and we wanted accommodation for our people from a distance to have their dinner in, as some had to go to the various public houses, which I am very much opposed to. But I do fear there are some professing the doctrines of grace who would sooner go and sit down in a public house, and have their ale and talk over their business matters than sit down with a few poor, sensible sinners and speak of what God has done for their souls. I fear the secret is because God never has done anything for their souls. All that is done for them has been done by their tongues; and when their tongues lie silent in death their religion will be silent too. It will never speak for them before God in heaven, nor before men on earth: for, “the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.”

But to return. We had not a foot of ground belonging to the chapel outside its walls; but there was an old house and slip of ground abutting on to the chapel. My friend, Mr. Chapman, said to me one day, “I think the time has come that we must do something to the chapel.” “Well,” I said, “I hope it has”; and I felt truly glad, though I knew it would cut out

plenty of work for body and soul. And truly I found it so. The wise man says, "In all labour there is profit"; but sometimes we have plenty of labour before we realise much profit. But I hope we are now enjoying a little of the fruits of our labour.

Well, we purchased the old house at a cost of a little over £100, and we sat down and counted the cost before we began to build, and found it would cost something over £300. The method we adopted to raise it was for myself and the four deacons to have books, and for the church and congregation to put their names down for as much as they could; and truly they came forth most liberally, considering the times had been so bad, for most of our people are men that cultivate the soil, labourers and farmers. I must also speak a little of the builder. Truly it was a favour from our God to fall into the hands of such a man, who was kind, honest and tender-hearted, and I believe has the fear of God in his heart. And may the Lord bless him in his basket and in his store.

The work went on. When the payments became due the money was always ready; and when the work was completed, with extra work we had to have done, we found the cost would be £450; but when we had our thanksgiving, the debt was all cleared off. We might well exclaim, "What hath God wrought for us!" Well, my reader, I will tell you what He has done. Just what He told me He would do for us. While the work was going on, I was sitting in my room and the Lord dropped these words into my soul: "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and ... hast not denied My name." Blessings on His dear name, I do humbly hope I shall never deny His name. I do believe He has given me seals to my ministry and souls for my hire in this place; and my prayer to Almighty God is that the place may be the spiritual birthplace of many poor sinners to come.

I pray the great Head of the church may bless these my poor scribblings to His poor and afflicted people, for His name's sake.

Here the writings of Isaac Lewis end. Next month, if the Lord will, we shall give a few details of the latter part of his life, and later his death and funeral.

To receive Christ's righteousness alone, His blood alone for salvation, is the sum of the gospel. When the soul, in all duties and distresses, can say, "Nothing but Christ; Christ alone for righteousness, justification, sanctification, redemption (1 Cor. 1. 30); not humblings, not duties, not graces," then the soul has got above the reach of the billows.

Thomas Wilcox

BOOK REVIEWS

Edward Vorley, His Life and Correspondence, by Graham S. Ward; 71 pages; price £3.50; published by The Huntingtonian Press and obtainable from 72a Upper Northam Road, Hedge End, Southampton, Hants., SO30 4EB.

In the early years of the *Gospel Standard* a series of deep, experimental letters was inserted, written by a variety of correspondents. Nine of these were signed "E. Vorley" and very little is known of this gracious minister except the short obituary inserted in the *Gospel Standard* for 1838. The author has researched into Edward Vorley's life and produced this interesting book, showing his connection with both William Huntington and William Gadsby. In fact William Gadsby is quoted as saying that it was one of Edward Vorley's sermons that was the first in which he heard the gospel and he spoke of him as his spiritual father (*Gospel Standard* 1874, page 352). It was William Gadsby who conducted Edward Vorley's funeral (see page 17).

The first twenty pages contain an account of the life with short biographical sketches of his contemporaries, while the remaining pages include the letters, with the obituary as an appendix. Other appendices show in tabular form applications for Meeting House licences which show the extent of Edward Vorley's ministry both in Northamptonshire and Leicestershire. This also shows the difficulties experienced by nonconformist ministers and their congregations in the eighteenth century.

Whilst it has proved impossible for the author to give precise dates, due to lack of original records, this book provides useful background information. It also establishes the connection between the Strict Baptist churches and those in the Huntingtonian connection. The real value, however, is the spiritual letters which show how near these favoured people lived to their God, and the strength of their faith. We commend this book to our readers.

J.A.H.

From the Grampians to Manchester: the Life of A.B. Taylor; paperback; 64 pages; price £2.95 plus 58p postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from 12(b) Roundwood Lane, Harpenden, Herts. AL5 3DD.

This is a delightful little book, and we are pleased to welcome its publication.

Alexander Barrie Taylor (1803-1887) was a remarkable man and minister. Apart from grace he must have been a man of remarkable ability as it is said that Arminians, who hated his doctrines, would walk miles to hear the majestic way he announced the opening hymn and his impressive reading of the Scriptures.

A.B. Taylor was Gadsby's successor at Manchester, and both pastorates lasted thirty-eight years. Usually, in the history of the church of God, when an eminent minister has died, his successor has been unable to keep the congregation – but when A.B. Taylor died, his congregation was as large as in William Gadsby's days (nearly 1,000).

We knew some of A.B. Taylor's hearers years ago. One thing we always remember. One godly old lady in her nineties told us she did not think his preaching was much different or better than preachers in recent days. "But O the power!" she added.

As well as being a profitable book, this is a most interesting book – especially the preacher’s account of his boyhood in Scotland, and his love of hunting and shooting.

This account has appeared in *Six Remarkable Ministers*. It is described as “Edited by B.A. Ramsbottom,” but our only part was to insert footnotes explaining people and places, and to try to find a few facts about the latter part of A.B. Taylor’s life. Sadly, his own account ends over thirty years before his death.

The book is beautifully compiled, with a striking picture of the Scottish mountains on the front cover.

Halloween; booklet; 15 pages; published by Christian Values in Education, and obtainable *free of charge* from P.O. Box 273, Oakington, Cambridgeshire, CB4 5FW.

This nicely produced pamphlet warns against the dangers of Halloween (October 31st). Years ago most people in this country seemed to think Halloween was just “innocent fun”; ghosts, goblins, witches, pumpkins, etc. However, it is very clear that there is something sinister and Satanic about keeping Halloween, and parents and children need to be warned against it – which this little book clearly does. Increasingly Halloween is bound up with the occult.

Most interesting is the letter included, a warning by the Inspectors of the Inner London Education Authority, issued some years ago, against the dangers of the occult.

Thousands not Millions is a similarly produced booklet issued by Christian Values in Education, and obtainable, also free of charge, from the same address. The title refers to the age of the earth, and the booklet, in a scientific but simple way, deals with such things as radioisotope dating, carbon dating, fossils, etc., and concludes with some relevant scriptures.

We feel that the two booklets, on subjects so different, will be of help to parents and children. Recommendation is given concerning further reading.

New Testament Commentaries, by Geoffrey B. Wilson; paperbacks; Vol. I, Romans to Ephesians; 680 pages; price £9.50; Vol. II, Philippians to Hebrews and Revelation; 601 pages; price £9.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian Bookshops.

In 1969 The Banner of Truth began to publish commentaries by Geoffrey Wilson, a Yorkshire minister, on the New Testament epistles. Over the years we have reviewed them as they came out. Now they are all put together in two volumes.

In many ways these books have been a new type of commentary. They have been described as “Reformed Digests,” the best comments by many writers being gathered together. Over the years, as the publishers remark, they have grown into commentaries in their own right.

The comments are clearly Calvinistic. For instance, on Hebrews 2. 9 (Christ tasting death for every man), the commentary reads:

“*For every man:* The scope of this declaration is determined by the context, which shows that Christ died for ‘them that shall inherit salvation’ (1. 14), the ‘many sons’ (2. 10), those who are ‘sanctified’ (2. 11), His ‘brethren’ (2. 11, 12), and the ‘children’ whom God had given Him (2. 13). . . . ‘There is not the slightest warrant in this text to extend the reference of the vicarious death of

Christ beyond those who are most expressly referred to in the context. This text shows how plausible off-hand quotations may be and yet how baseless is such an appeal in support of a doctrine of universal atonement.” (The writer quoted in this case is John Murray.)

When these reasonably priced commentaries first began to appear, we wrote: “These are not heart-warming works, nor is there much spiritual application.... The value of these commentaries is their great *usefulness* – they clearly expound the meaning of the text – and their *reasonable price*.” Their helpfulness is in giving the exact meaning of the verse.

Sadly the Authorised Version is not kept to.

THE ETERNAL SON

Proverbs 8. 22-31

Ere God had built the mountains,
Or raised the fruitful hills;
Before He filled the fountains
That feed the running rills;
In Me, from everlasting,
The wonderful I AM,
Found pleasures never wasting,
And Wisdom is My name.

When, like a tent to dwell in,
He spread the skies abroad,
And swathed about the swelling
Of ocean's mighty flood;
He wrought by weight and measure,
And I was with Him then;
Myself the Father's pleasure,
And Mine, the sons of men.

Thus wisdom's words discover
Thy glory and Thy grace,
Thou everlasting Lover
Of our unworthy race!
Thy gracious eye surveyed us
Ere stars were seen above;
In wisdom Thou hast made us,
And died for us in love.

And could'st Thou be delighted
With creatures such as we,
Who, when we saw Thee, slighted,
And nailed Thee to the tree?
Unfathomable wonder,
And mystery divine!
The voice that speaks in thunder,
Says, “Sinner, I am thine!”

William Cowper (1731-1800)

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
NOVEMBER 2005

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

A PRAYER FOR REVIVAL

*Sermon preached at the Meetings of the Gospel Standard
Societies at Rochdale Road Chapel, Manchester,
on September 10th, 2005*

Text: “Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south” (Psa. 126. 4).

This urgent prayer seems to be with so many of the Lord’s people at present, a desire that the Lord in love and mercy will “turn again our captivity.” Did you notice that this prayer was mentioned right at the very beginning of the prayer meeting, in the opening prayer this morning, and it was mentioned again in the closing prayer at the end of the business meeting, and it was mentioned right at the end of our Secretary’s report? This desire that almighty God in His love and mercy will “turn again our captivity” – because, beloved friends, only He can do it. No one else can do it.

It seems very clear that at present the church of God is in captivity; that is for the most part. And also many of the Lord’s dear people personally are in captivity. We see in our congregations so few going forth to minister the Word of life, in our congregations so few being clearly called by God’s grace, and very few being brought right out of the world into the church of God as happened so often in former days. So few of those who know and fear the Lord are blessed with the sweet assurance of faith; so, not many are able to make an open profession of the Lord’s name. You see – captivity.

But then what of our own hearts? And how is it with so many? The darkness, the deadness, the bondage, the guilt. O that it were otherwise – that there were more light, and more life, and more love, and more liberty. “Captivity.” Some have known better days. “O that it were with me as in days past!” So I believe the Lord’s people are conscious of this spirit of captivity which abounds in the church of God and which abounds in the hearts of so many. “Captivity.” And only the Lord can bring out of it, and only the Lord can deliver.

So this is a prayer, an urgent prayer, and it is a prayer made to the Lord: “Turn again our captivity, O Lord.” Thinking on this verse, there seemed to be an emphasis on those two little words, “O Lord.” You see this is a vital thing. It is the person addressed, He who is almighty God,

He who is omnipotent, and above all, He who is merciful, He who is gracious.

“Turn again our captivity, O Lord.” One thing is abundantly clear: that if the Lord ever does condescend to turn again our captivity, it will be through the infinite merits of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It will be for Jesus’ sake. “Every grace and every favour comes to us through Jesus’ blood.” No favour is given on any other ground. No sinner can merit it or deserve it. And even when the Lord’s people become fervent in their prayers (and O that we were more fervent in our prayers!), but even when God’s people are, it is not because of the fervency of their prayers, it is for Jesus’ sake. So every blessing the church of God ever knows is on the grounds of the Saviour’s finished work at Calvary.

You know, beloved friends, there are so many blessed things spoken about the work of Christ at Calvary, and we love to speak of them, don’t we? and we love to hear of them, but never forget that He “led captivity captive.” But you see, as it concerns this text and it concerns this prayer, our desire is that in love and mercy the Lord will “turn again *our* captivity.” And when we see that only He can do it, when we see it must be “for Jesus’ sake,” and when we see that it must be on the grounds of mercy through blood, then to remember that at Calvary the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ “led captivity captive.” When there He grappled with all the powers of darkness, with all the powers of hell, He conquered when He fell, and His death was a triumphant death. Dying He “led captivity captive.” So that wonderful word: “Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive,” Satan, death, the powers of darkness, the powers of hell. “Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” So may this be the prayer of many a heart this afternoon, and may we look for answers.

“Turn again our captivity, O Lord.” Now there have been those times when the Lord in love and mercy *has* turned again the captivity of His people. We think of Israel in Egypt. The captivity; no way of escape; no way of release; the taskmaster’s whip. And yet the time came when the Lord turned again their captivity. They could not do it themselves, but the Lord in mercy did it for them. And let us remember that when He turned again the captivity of His people in Egypt, it was not without blood. There was a lamb slain, and the blood shed, and the blood sprinkled, and the solemn Passover night. Redemption by blood had to be burnt in the heart of every faithful Israelite. I believe a few of them looked forward by faith to the cross. But the kindness of the Lord in turning again the captivity of His ancient people in Egypt. “I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have

heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them.” Now that is our God. A God who sees; a God who hears; a God who knows; a God who comes down; a God who delivers. And must we say, dare we say, “This God” – the God who delivered Israel out of Egypt – “this God is our God for ever and ever”? But this is the God to whom we pray here, the God who sees and hears and knows and comes down and delivers.

“Turn again our captivity, O Lord.” And then again we have the Babylonian captivity, when Israel was taken captive into Babylon. That beautiful chapter, Jeremiah chapter 33 (of which I read part this afternoon), speaks of captivity; but it speaks of captivity being turned. You see Jerusalem was desolate. Jerusalem was in ruins. Jerusalem was uninhabited. The people had been led forth captive into Babylon, and it seemed such a hopeless case, such an impossible case. “Call unto Me, and I will ... show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” There are some wonderful promises made in that chapter: “There shall be heard in this place, which ye say shall be desolate ... the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride.” Of course these promises literally were that Jerusalem would be restored, Jerusalem would be inhabited. We think of the wonderful days of Ezra, Nehemiah, the rebuilding of the temple, the rebuilding of the city. They were praying at our prayer meeting on Thursday evening for the Lord to raise up Ezras and to raise up Nehemiahs in the church today. Well, may He do so.

Sometimes I have looked at that promise in Jeremiah chapter 33 in a gospel sense and long that it might be fulfilled: “In this place, which ye say shall be desolate.” Well people may, because we look round and we know the desolations of Jerusalem, don’t we? We do not need to have them proved. O but “this place, which ye say shall be desolate.” Well, that is what men say, but what does God say? “Again there shall be heard” – what, all kinds of things? – no, just this one: “Again there shall be heard ... the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride.”

You know, when the Lord does turn again the captivity of His people this is one thing which is heard in the streets of Jerusalem: the voice of the heavenly Bridegroom. When things are desolate, His gracious voice is silent. But now *again*, “Again there shall be heard ... the voice of the bridegroom.” When He speaks with power to a dying sinner, sees him loathsome in his sin and blood, and says unto him, “Live.” That is the voice of the Bridegroom, that divine almighty voice. And when He gathers His sheep: “My sheep hear My voice.” And when His voice is heard in the promises, and when His voice is heard in the gospel. And when His voice is heard speaking words like this to a poor, lost, ruined, polluted sinner: “Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee.”

O you see, these are the days of the Son of Man when the voice of the Bridegroom is heard *again* in Jerusalem's streets, when her captivity is turned. Wouldn't the people love to hear the voice of the Bridegroom in the gospel, that almighty voice:

"Hark! the voice of love and mercy
Sounds aloud from Calvary!"?

The voice saying, "It is finished." O these days of the Son of Man. This is the turning of Zion's captivity, when again the voice of the Bridegroom is heard speaking in the streets of Jerusalem. Now may it be so. I have been thinking recently, it is almost exactly 200 years within a few days since William Gadsby came to live in Manchester, and he lived close to this spot. A poor house next to the chapel that was in danger of falling down. O but what a turning of Zion's captivity followed! And how the voice of the heavenly Bridegroom was heard in this place! Now, may it be so again in love and mercy.

"Turn again our captivity, O Lord." May the voice of the Bridegroom be heard in Jerusalem's streets. And then you know, the voice of the bride will be heard. When it is captivity, when it is desolation, the bride is silent, isn't she? O but when the voice of the Bridegroom is heard, when the voice of the Bridegroom speaks, then there will be the voice of the bride. Here will be one confessing her sin; it is the voice of the bride. Here will be another one crying for mercy; it is the voice of the bride. And here is one saying:

"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

It is the voice of the bride. Then the voice of the bride in humble gratitude when her own captivity is turned, and when the church's captivity is turned. "The voice of the Bridegroom, and the voice of the bride." There is liberty now where it was captivity before. There is life now where it was death before. There is heavenly light shining where it was darkness before. O the turning again of the captivity of God's people! And those are sweet seasons when the voice of the bride is heard saying, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul."

"With wonder we attend,
While they the Sinner's Friend,
With tears of holy joy, extol."

"How pleasant is the gate
Where willing converts wait
For fellowship with Zion here;

Where they with wonder tell
How they escaped from hell,
And hope in glory to appear."

O the turning again of the captivity of God's people! But you know, even today it is not all darkness, it is not all death, is it? Now and again, not as often as we would like, but now and again we do see the Lord's gracious work and we do hear the voice of the Bridegroom, and we do hear the voice of the bride, don't we? O to know these things more.

"Turn again our captivity, O Lord." And you see in the history of the church of God there have been those times when the Lord has turned again the captivity of His people. We think of those long, dark ages when Satan reigned and when the nations of the earth were held in bondage to the church of Rome. And then in love and mercy the Lord turned again the captivity of His people. There was a Luther raised up, there was a Calvin. There was life instead of death in our own beloved land. It was really the Word of God here more than any man, the Word of God used with divine almighty power. And then again it was almost like a second Glorious Reformation, after days of darkness and hardness and bondage and infidelity, and the Lord raised up a Whitefield and a Grimshaw and a Venn and a Berridge, and England was turned upside down. You see, "the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save." It is only the Lord that can turn again our captivity. Thou must do it, Lord.

"Turn again our captivity, O Lord." Really, every one of us personally is born in captivity, aren't we? Born in captivity to sin and Satan. John Newton says, "Satan's blind slave, I sported with death," and another hymnwriter says, "Satan's servant, and I loved his service well." So we are all in captivity until the Lord in love and mercy puts His holy fear in our hearts in the new birth, when divine life is given. Then we are set free from the captivity of sin and Satan. But one of the great mysteries of the gospel is this: that by nature every one of us are captives, held in captivity to sin and Satan, but we do not know it until the Lord begins to set us free. And when the Lord begins to set us free then we feel our captivity. That is one of the mysteries. But I believe that is part of the meaning of that beautiful word, "Turn you to the Strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." What is a prisoner of hope? Well, we are all prisoners by nature, we are all captives. But when a sinner begins to feel his captivity, begins to feel that he is a prisoner, then he is a prisoner of hope. "There is hope in Israel concerning this thing." Then, "turn you to the Strong hold, ye prisoners of hope."

"Prisoners of hope, to Jesus turn;
He's a Strong hold, ordained for you;

Gird up your loins, and cease to mourn,
And to the Lamb your way pursue."

And so a sinner feeling his captivity: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

"Turn again our captivity, O Lord." "He shall let go My captives, not for price nor reward." And I think you will find that freedom from captivity, that liberty, whether it is doctrinally or experimentally or feelingly, it is by the blood of Christ. That beautiful word, "As for Thee also, by the blood of Thy covenant I have sent forth Thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." That is captivity, isn't it? "The pit wherein is no water." O but "through the blood of the everlasting covenant." O to see the blessed Redeemer sealing the covenant of grace with His own precious blood; and it is life-giving blood, and it is liberty-speaking blood. "Turn again our captivity, O Lord." But then there are times when the Lord's people sink back into bondage, there is the darkness and the felt death; and there is not the liberty. But it must be on the same grounds as at the beginning, gospel ground: "Turn again our captivity, O Lord." Well, what a subject, what a theme, *the captivity!* And yet the longing for liberty, the longing for the captivity to be turned.

"Turn again our captivity, O Lord, *as the streams of the south.*" Now, what does that mean? I take the analogy to be this – the south of Palestine, as it was called then, or Israel today, for part of the year is excessively dry, and the streams are dried up. You may go where there was once a lovely little stream and it is just a dry, rocky bed. You see there is nothing moving, there is no life; it is just that rocky bed. And then the rains come, the heavy rains, and the snow melts up in the mountains and it flows down. And in a very short time that dry, rocky bed is almost a raging torrent, a fast-flowing stream. Now, I take it that is the meaning of this verse. "Turn again our captivity, O Lord," just like that. Because sure it is, so often in the church of God it is just like a dry, rocky bed, isn't it? where the stream once used to flow. I am sure it is with our barren hearts, that dry, rocky bed; no life, nothing moving.

"Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams of the south." I want to speak graciously and carefully. O but in the church of God, it is a sad thing when people are completely satisfied with that dry, rocky bed! Well, they say, You can see it, it is clear that the stream flowed here once. You have got the Bible, you have got the hymnbook, you have got the services, you have got the system. And what about the death? And what about the nothingness? There isn't a thing out of place! There are a lot of things out of place, you know, when that glorious stream begins to flow. Mind you, it is pure, clear, crystal water. But sometimes when that stream begins to flow, it carries a bit of rubbish along before it is cleared out of the way. O! beware of being satisfied with outward,

empty, dead formality. We want a religion of life, a religion of reality, a religion of power, a religion of the Holy Ghost. Nothing else will do, nothing else will satisfy, in the church of God or personally.

“Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams of the south.” So one or two things, beloved friends. First of all, *it must come from heaven*. It is not done by some kind of irrigation, it is not done by someone filling a bucket and pouring it in the dry river bed. All other means cannot avail, however well-meant, however well-intentioned. O but when the rain comes, when the rain begins to fall; and now there is that beautiful, fast-flowing stream! But it must be God’s work; an imitation will not do, man’s work will not do; it must be a divine work, it must come down from heaven; it must be those “showers of blessing.” But there is a precious promise if only we could plead it: “Times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.” But even naturally, when there is a period of drought, nobody can command the rain. We have that word in the prophets in a time of drought: “Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain?” You see, there is that season of drought and then suddenly the rain begins to fall, and then the stream begins to flow, and then the captivity of the church of God is turned. But it must be from heaven. The Lord enable us to look up, confess our sin, our unworthiness, our helplessness, on mercy’s ground to pray for it.

“Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south.” Secondly, *the suddenness of it*. I understand in the east there may be not a cloud in the sky, and then suddenly things begin to happen. If you want a commentary on this, in a strictly natural sense – you remember when Elijah was wrestling on the top of Mount Carmel. There had not been rain for those months and years; the drought and the famine and the death. And then that sudden downpour. “Turn again our captivity, O Lord,” like that, suddenly, unexpectedly, undeservedly. But you see, that little servant boy that Elijah sent, he sent him to see if there was any sign of the rain – any sign of the church’s captivity being turned. He came back and said, “There is nothing.” Perhaps that is what you and I find. We pray for it and the answer comes back, “There is nothing;” “Go again seven times.” O to be able to persevere in prayer. There was an old illiterate man in one of our chapels, and he was so tried, “importunity” in prayer, he just could not understand it. And one day, to his delight, the old pastor said, “Do you want to know what importunity means?” And he knocked on the pulpit and said, “Keep on knocking, keep on knocking, keep on knocking.” “Go again seven times” and at last that cloud, “a little cloud ... like a man’s hand.” O may we be able to pray that the Lord in love and mercy will appear and “turn again our captivity.” And personally in our hearts as well as in the church.

“Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south.” And the third thing, *the power of it*. O the power of it! It is a powerful work when the Lord turns again captivity. The work of the Holy Ghost is a powerful work. That rain descending from heaven, that stream flowing, carrying all before it; cleansing, healing. O the power of the Holy Spirit’s work in salvation, and the power of the Holy Spirit’s work in revival in the church of God. “Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?” Turn us again.

“Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south.” And then fourthly, *the gracious effect*. And that is what we want, don’t we? Following the preaching, in answer to our prayers, in the church of God, in our own hearts. I read to you in the Acts of the Apostles at the end of chapter 4; really it was a little prayer meeting, wasn’t it? And before the prayer meeting was ended the answer came, and their captivity was turned. Now, again I want to speak graciously and carefully; but you know, sometimes we pray so vaguely and generally that if someone asked if those prayers were answered, we would hardly know whether they were or they were not, because we hardly remember or know what we have prayed for. O, but you see, there was a little holy boldness. It was not presumption, it was not irreverence. How definite they were, and how they pleaded the name of Jesus, and how the Lord gave the answer! O, but this gracious effect.

“Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south.” Something moving where all seemed death before. Life instead of death; something moving where everything seemed to be still, and where everything was so dry and hard and barren before. Now these showers of blessing, this watering, and what is it going to be? The softening where everything was hard before, and something growing where everything was lifeless before, and where it was barren it is going to be fruitful. O, we want the Lord to turn our captivity, don’t we? In the church of God. Yes, but, to know our hearts made soft, to know that gracious effect, a sanctifying effect, a cleansing effect. To know that refreshing, to know that reviving. And, beloved friends, with it a little heavenly joy because these showers, these springs, they flow from Calvary. And,

“A bleeding Saviour seen by faith,
A sense of pardoning love,
A hope that triumphs over death,
Give joys like those above.”

Then your captivity is gone, beloved friends. And then, you know something of the sweet and glorious liberty of the children of God. “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” “Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south.”

THE GOSPEL STANDARD SOCIETIES NORTHERN MEETINGS

*Report of Meetings held at Rochdale Road Chapel, Manchester
on Saturday, September 10th, 2005*

PRAYER MEETING

Mr. T.J. Rosier read Luke 7. 36-50 and then spoke as follows:

Much could be said on the peripheral matters of this sacred narrative. Here we have Jesus, the eternal Son of God, the Son of man, upon the face of this earth doing His Father's will in saving sinners. He came into the world for this purpose, to redeem a people to God; and He has redeemed that people. The church of God is completely and fully redeemed in that they are sanctified and, according to the eternal thought of Jehovah, justified in His sight, though at this present time not all the church yet know Him; but they will know Him, and when they know Him, they will know that they are justified. "And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13. 39). Then they will live in hope that they will one day see God, as Job had that blessed hope in his deep distress: "Yet in my flesh" he said, "shall I see God." Now, my dear friends, one day we will see God. Yea, the teeming millions upon millions in this world will see God. The important thing is this, to know that our sins are forgiven.

Simon the Pharisee was a witness to Almighty God in the Person of the beloved Son appearing as that blessed Son of man in this world. He is now both the Son of God and Son of man on high. Simon the Pharisee was a witness that this wicked woman's sins were forgiven. We do not read that *his* sins were forgiven. That is a vital point in religion, isn't it? Are our sins forgiven? I was pondering when coming along this morning, how we long to see the Lord's work appearing in the earth. Moses prayed, "Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children." You know, we do not read or hear of many people being saved. We do not hear of many people's sins being forgiven today. There is still religion left. People have a religious point of view. People become Christians, but my friends, how many are really saved, and saved by grace?

We have a beautiful and sacred narrative before us. Observe, very solemnly, that the Pharisee despised the desperate sinner that came in from the city. It would appear from the narrative that he did not know pardon himself. He despised Christ. Fancy *this* man that they said was a prophet and the Messiah! Look, he received sinners! Fancy that! O

he cannot be the Messiah. He cannot be the Blessed One sent from God, whom we are waiting for.

Well, what brought this woman in to the feet of the Lord Jesus? Really, I would just speak of it in two ways. She knew two things, by faith. What were they? Firstly, she had a very solemn, devastating knowledge about her own wicked and wretched place, where she was in the sight of God. She knew that. Secondly, she knew who Christ was. "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." How vital! Both go together, don't they? O there may be those who say they know Christ but they do not know how wicked they are. Therefore they cannot really see by faith any real beauty or glory in Him, suitable for a sinner. They see no garment for glory and beauty, do they? The blue, pointing out His divinity, the scarlet pointing out His humanity, particularly the blood of the everlasting covenant, the purple the sacred blend of both. The embroidered gold showing His infinite worth and value. O that sets forth His value, doesn't it? Now you see, we can say we know Christ, but what value does He have? How often do we go to Him about ourselves, our sins, our situations, our never-dying soul, about our unknown future and about eternity, and the approaching hour and article of death? Some men may make a religion of knowing what a sinner they are, but they never really seem to know the worth and value of Immanuel. Both are vital. So that is why this woman came in. She had a solemn realisation of what she was, and knew who He was.

Now you know, because she knew what she was she had a desperate need, but she had precious faith. While she was about her wickedness in the city at some time, God had solemnly blessed her with eternal life, and blessed her with a hearing of faith. O you see, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. The Word of God reached her heart. We do not know how or by what means she had heard of Christ. We read in other narratives in the gospels of the woman with the issue of blood and also of the centurion, that when they heard of Jesus, they either sent a message or they came themselves. So this is a very vital thing, isn't it; do we know Him and the power of His resurrection?

But although this sweet and sacred incident is only recorded once in the life of Immanuel here and the life of this saved sinner, yet spiritually, pilgrims will often come to this place. How often we have to go weeping at the feet of the Lord Jesus about our sins, about ourselves, if we have a tender conscience. If, my dear friends, we have communion with Christ, by His very presence we shall solemnly realise what sort of people we are; our very nature, and the height and the depth of our guilt. If we are saved from outward sin, O the potential for evil on account of the corruption within! It makes a poor sinner groan, as the apostle did.

Well, it was these two things that she knew. She was a sinner. She was lost. Yet she knew He was the Christ, the blessed One, and this enabled her to come. This brought her to His feet. A knowledge of sin without any living faith arising does not bring us to the feet of Jesus. It drives us to works and to duties and to superstitions and all manner of things in religion. The poet says in Hymn 144:

“Lo! glad I come; and Thou, blest Lamb,
Shalt take me to Thee as I am;
Nothing but sin I Thee can give;
Nothing but love shall I receive.”

If you and I have a religion of the Holy Ghost, we shall be often found coming to Christ, and that is what we need today. Look at the solemn desolation in the earth. Look at the wickedness among the nations. Look at the apostasy in the earth; so-called Protestant nations have turned their back on God, like our own nation. We are leaders in wickedness, violence, covetousness, immorality and pleasure. O how we need the Lord to blow upon us in Zion, both personally and collectively! This is the only remedy – the work of God!

This woman believed that Jesus was the Christ and she believed by the Holy Ghost. “This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.” If we believe – and O may we believe more! May I believe and you believe more to the saving of our soul, that we might value Him, press toward Him, live upon Him, esteem Him, obey Him, and cast our care upon Him. May we also confess Him, and take up our cross daily (I preach to myself as I preach to others), denying ourselves, to follow Him and be His disciples.

This woman was not afraid to come. That is wonderful, isn’t it? Until Christ is made precious by the Holy Ghost, we are afraid to come, if we have any knowledge of ourselves. Nay, but she came without presumption. Yea, although she was a sinner, we see here pure faith in exercise. She came to His feet and wept, and kissed and anointed His holy, blessed feet. And there she was, a sinner saved by grace. Where is she today? We do not know where her mortal remains are. They are dust now. But we know this: her redeemed spirit is in the presence of God. O what a mercy, salvation is of grace!

Well really, we shall know these two things in our lives here, which are the two main things in our religion. We can know all sorts of things about religion. We can have a point of view about this and a point of view about that. We can argue, we can debate and we can discuss, but the religion that gets people home to heaven is the religion of this woman. I believe in our life as we are led of the Spirit, being the sons of God, we are led to the same place as this woman. May it please Almighty God to bless us each with eternal life, and may we not assume

that all that come to chapel are saved by grace. God works His own work. What a mercy that the gospel is still preached and it will be preached to the end of time! May it have a blessed effect, that the Word might be clothed with power in this dark and cloudy day. May each of us be affected by the gospel, to be brought to the feet of Christ, knowing solemnly our helplessness, our guiltiness, our weakness, and our utter ruin.

May we realise and be taught (often painfully by our mistakes) that in our flesh dwells no good thing. Jesus says in John 15, "For without Me ye can do nothing," (or as it says in the margin, "severed from Me"). Without that drawing near and vital communion, ye can do nothing. Ah, says the apostle, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." And will we find strength, strength to continue, strength to die, strength to overcome, strength to hold fast? I say, we will find strength at the feet of the Lord Jesus. His blood speaks in heaven. He is "the Lord our Righteousness." We are not our own righteousness. We have none whatsoever. He is a mighty Saviour, and He has promised. Now when faith comes, you see, these things become exceeding precious.

So faith brought her there. I believe in our pilgrimage, we shall come to this again and again. May it be so daily. In the olden times they used to live close, didn't they? We are not so close today; we are lukewarm. A solemn position we are in. May the Lord blow upon us to make us truly close, that we may be found coming, confessing and waiting upon Him, with weeping. Those tears were tears of real repentance, those tears were real love and joy as she

"stood amazed, and wondered when,
Or why, this ocean rose,
That wafts salvation down to men,
His traitors and His foes."

Ah, she was a believer. The Lord make us true believers, to flee, to dwell at His feet, to fill our mouth with arguments and give us such a realisation that God is love, and rich in mercy. His Word stands that we should press, and press to His feet.

Well, these are just a few remarks. May we each then be brought to Him by faith, both this day and as we journey on. May He be the substance of the gospel ministry in the earth, and among us as churches.

I would like to ask as many friends as possible to pray. May the Holy Ghost help each one, and I would just tenderly and kindly remind the friends that as we desire as many to pray as possible would you, as helped, be as brief as you can? We do need some unction. The Lord grant the Holy Ghost among us.

Hymns 87 (2nd part), 755 and 535 were sung during the meeting. Mr. Rosier opened the meeting with prayer, and called on the following to pray: Mr. J.R. Ince (Pastor, Fitzwilliam), Mr. F. Warburton (Manchester), Mr. E.A. Palmer (Fenstanton), Mr. J.E. Pack (Pastor, Irthlingborough), Mr. T. Abbot (Ossett), Mr. M.P. Hydon (Attleborough) and Mr. D.J. Christian (Luton, Bethel). Mr. Rosier closed the meeting with prayer and the benediction.

BUSINESS MEETING

After the singing of part of hymn 374, Mr. G.D. Buss (Chairman of the Gospel Standard Societies) read Hebrews 12, verses 18 to 29, and then spoke as follows:

God's servant, the Apostle Paul, like Moses centuries before at the burning bush, knew something of the greatness of God's holiness and majesty. And that is something that needs to be revived in our churches in our day – a sense of the majesty of God.

But you will notice that though Paul said that he had not come to the mount that might be touched, we know from Romans chapter 7 that he *had* been there in his experience. He had known what it was to be under the law, and that consuming fire, of which he speaks in the last verse, had consumed all his fleshly hopes, and all his fleshly works, and all his man-made religion, and all that he had set his hope to, before he had known the Saviour of whom he speaks later.

But what a mercy he could say, and those who are led by the Spirit will be led to say, "But ye are come unto Mount Zion." O what different tidings from Sinai to Zion. Sinai can only condemn the sinner. It demands and commands, rightly so, but its demands and commands are beyond the reach of fallen man – there are no good tidings, no glad tidings for sinners at Mount Sinai. But O what sweetness there is at Mount Zion, particularly the blood of sprinkling, of which we have heard this morning, both in the address given and the prayers. O how vital that blood of sprinkling! And how sweet it was that Paul knew it; knew the difference.

Also he spoke of a voice that made the mountain shake and tremble; the voice of God condemning, cursing, the law, yet the voice of the blood of Christ speaks better things:

"Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within."

O what a mercy if we know something savingly of this! This is the gospel Paul delighted to preach: peace made by the blood of the cross.

Mr. F.A. Ince (Fitzwilliam) then asked God's blessing on the meeting.

CHAIRMAN: This is our Business Meeting and we do appreciate the opportunity to gather with the dear friends in the north at Rochdale Road and others who have turned in to support the Societies that we love. But I believe that it is a deeper thing than a Society that we love. I believe there is that desire to maintain the truths upon which our denomination was founded so many years ago. And we desire that those things still be held in high esteem.

It is a deep concern to those on the Committee, and many others as well, concerning the need for gospel ministers in our day. Very few are being sent out to preach. We are also deeply concerned that the ministry should continue to be what it was in days gone by when godly men spoke of those things they had tasted, handled and felt of the good Word of life. May it be our burden that the Lord will raise up such men, and help those men who are labouring, especially in this area, to continue to proclaim without hesitation and without any deviation from the truth, to the right hand or the left, those precious things which alone can save the soul – the knowledge of sin and the knowledge of salvation, and that vital knowledge of a precious Christ. That is what we desire to hear in our pulpits, and those of us who stand in them desire in our poor way to proclaim, "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

The Secretary of the Societies, Mr. H. Mercer, then read his report.

GOSPEL STANDARD AID AND POOR RELIEF SOCIETIES

Mr. Chairman and dear friends,

As we meet again today, we are reminded how swiftly time passes because it does not seem a year ago that we last met here at Manchester. We are witnesses to the many changes around us. There is the continuing erosion in our nation of those principles which in past days were the foundation upon which as a nation we stood. The Lord's judgments are abroad in the land but men pay little heed to these things, giving no thought to the sovereignty and power of God. The national church is in serious decline and the leaders of the church manifest their blindness and ignorance of the Holy Scriptures, denying the truths they supposedly uphold. Sadly, our national church is becoming more and more concerned with political issues rather than religious principles.

In our own churches there is much to cause us sorrow of heart. How little evidence there is of the work of the Holy Spirit amongst us and, whilst there is much preaching, how few "signs following" appear! However, our chief concern is our own spiritual condition: where is the evidence of divine life within and the bringing forth of fruit? There is a cause for this barrenness and if we look within we shall see how strong the influence of the world is and what a cleaving there

is to those carnal things that please the flesh and bring desolation. The psalmist said, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken Thou me according to Thy Word." It is a great mercy if we are brought to feel our low state and to mourn over it. In this condition the Lord is pleased to show us that there are eternal realities which can never change, and under a sense of our poverty, the Holy Spirit gives us a real longing to be a possessor of them. May it be so with each of us.

The Committee has to deal with various issues affecting our churches, many of which cause much sadness, and it is solemnly concerned about the low state of Zion. Much of the time at the quarterly Committee meetings is spent in considering what is taking place in some of our churches, but the Committee has no authority over the churches. The Committee asks that those who willingly subscribe to the Gospel Standard position continue to remain loyal to that position and seek to uphold it. It is its desire that the Lord would clothe the preached Word with divine authority and that it may be a quickening influence whereby the solemn state we are in is not only acknowledged but there is a falling down before the Lord, pleading for forgiveness and restoration.

The financial position of the Societies continues to be stable. Partly as a result of the improved rates of interest being received on the investment of funds in COIF deposit accounts, the Aid Society and Poor Relief Society overall received sufficient income to cover the payment of grants and the cost of administration of the funds. The cash receipts of the Aid Society for the six months ended June 30th, 2005, were £22,723 and the payments £19,833, whereas in the Poor Relief Society the cash receipts were £18,499 and the payments £22,727. Of the total expenditure of £42,560, £30,470 was in respect of grants, and the Annual General Meeting expenses were £2,760. The Committee is thankful for the continuing loyal support of our subscribers and also for the donations made and collections taken for the benefit of the Societies.

The Committee is actively looking into the possibility of holding the Annual General Meetings in 2006 at a different location because of the high cost of Westminster Chapel, but many of those attending expressed satisfaction with the location and the facilities that are offered by Westminster Chapel.

The Poor Relief Society makes a grant to some of our chapels to assist with the cost of the ministry, and if any causes are experiencing difficulty in adequately meeting the cost of travelling and making a reasonable payment to the minister, the Committee would be very willing to consider giving financial assistance.

Mention was made at the Annual General Meetings that the Charity Commission has issued a draft of a scheme which will govern the Gospel Standard Societies charity. This would merge the Aid Society, Poor Relief Society and Convalescent Fund. A sub-committee has met to consider this draft and there is a great deal of work to do on it before a revision of the draft can be produced. This work is proceeding and in due time details of the scheme will be available for consideration by our subscribers. There will be no changes to the principles and original objects of the Societies but now that we are in the 21st century there will be a rephrasing after review of some of the clauses. It is hoped that this will give more clarity. Charity law has changed over the long period that the Societies have been in existence and the provisions of the current charity legislation will be incorporated into the scheme.

The Gadsby Memorial Christmas Fund continues to be supported by a number of our chapels who take annual collections or make donations, and these are gratefully acknowledged. We are also grateful to our friends who personally support this Fund. As mentioned on past occasions, the Committee of this Fund is dependent upon the recommendations of pastors and deacons for the names of friends who need assistance. Forms have been sent out for completion by correspondents in respect of the distribution to be made in November and should be returned to the Secretary by the end of October.

The Magazine Fund was in surplus again last year, and one of the main reasons for this was the substantial benefit that has accrued because the text of the magazines is now supplied to our printers by email. The cost of printing the magazines has been reduced by about 20% since 2003 and the Committee is very grateful to those who willingly undertake the work necessary to effect this cost saving. The Gospel Standard Trust continues to support the publication of the magazines and the Committee is grateful to the Trust for this valuable assistance. The costings prepared for 2006 indicate that there is no necessity to increase the prices of the magazines paid by subscribers in the United Kingdom, but because of increased postal rates and currency fluctuations, it is necessary that the cost of the magazines to our friends in the United States, Canada, Australia and in Europe should marginally increase. It is always difficult to take a view in June of the exchange rate for the dollar and euro for the following year but the best estimate has been made.

We are thankful for the continued help the Lord gives to our Editors in the preparation of the material for publication in the magazines and seek that all needed grace and help will continue to be granted so that the magazines continue to be spiritually profitable to the readers.

Again we remind our friends that the Committee would welcome new subscribers to the Societies and it is hoped that more of our younger friends will be willing to become subscribers to the Societies so that in years to come there will continue to be solid support for the Gospel Standard position.

The Committee is very grateful to our friends here at Manchester for the welcome that is extended to us each year and for the facilities made available for the meeting we hold. There is a lot of preparation for the day and all that is provided for us is much appreciated.

The Committee again expresses its thanks to the many friends at home and overseas who prayerfully support it in its labour and responsibility. May the Lord be pleased to raise up men to continue to bear responsibility who have gracious discernment and who are established in the truth. Many of our churches have a number of reading services and there is a great need for ministers to be sent forth by the Lord to preach the everlasting gospel. May the Lord lay upon our hearts a burden in this respect. There is a growing tendency to drift into lighter things. May we be kept to the old paths, not by tradition, but by the constraining of free grace. It must be acknowledged that to a great degree the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from us. Our sins, worldly conformity and the carnality in our hearts have grieved the Holy Spirit. May we be brought to acknowledge the sad place into which we have collectively fallen and seek that the Lord would deliver us, granting a turning of our captivity and a day of true spiritual prosperity.

The Chairman said that if any friends had any questions to ask Mr. Mercer, he would be pleased to attend to those during the interval. He also thanked Mr. Mercer for all the work he does on behalf of the Societies.

Mr. T.H.W. Scott (Bethesda Secretary) then read his report.

GOSPEL STANDARD BETHESDA FUND

Mr. Chairman, subscribers and dear friends,

Once more we are pleased to have the opportunity to give a short report on the affairs of Bethesda.

The annual report for the year 2004 was the 60th, the Bethesda Fund having been set up during the closing years of the second world war, and established as a charity in the year 1944. The first Home to be opened was that at Redhill, which, after some remarkable turns of providence, was purchased for the sum of only £4,000. The fees for the first residents were just £1 6s. 0d per week, a far cry from today's fees approaching £400 per week.

Although we feel to have many mercies to record, we must of necessity share with our friends and supporters the Committee's anxiety over the large number of vacancies in the Homes, in some cases a higher number of vacancies than ever before in the Homes' history. With residents' fees in the order of £20,000 per year, it is easy to see that the loss of revenue arising from the current situation of nineteen vacancies is £380,000 per year. Although one solution would be drastically to increase the fees, it needs to be remembered that half of Bethesda residents are financed by Social Services who have a limit on the amount they are prepared to pay, and any further increases in fees would not be recovered.

A special meeting of the Bethesda Fund Committee was held at the end of July to consider the future direction of Bethesda. Much prayer was put up for guidance, feeling our own lack of wisdom, but confident that there is One who knows the future. Unless the Lord revives us again as a denomination, it seems certain that the number of residents seeking to enter the Homes will continue to decline. Although the Tunbridge Wells Home has kept full for several years, ten of the 16 residents are aged 90 or over, and one if spared until October will be 100, and so there must be changes before long.

The Committee will of necessity have to take early action to contain this serious position, and to protect the reserves of the Fund for a future generation. Whatever course of action is taken will be painful for some of our residents and their relatives, as we are truly conscious of the desirability of maintaining Homes over as wide a geographical spread as possible. However, the small unit size of our Homes, and the declining numbers, make changes to the existing position essential, and contraction in the provision of places is inevitable.

We are able to report that the Tunbridge Wells Home has applied successfully to change its registration to be able to care for residents with more advanced dementia, and some of the staff have undertaken special training in dementia care. Without this change in registration at least two of the residents would have been forced to move out of the Home.

You will be pleased to hear that Mrs. Susan Verweij has now been officially registered as the new Home Manager at Harpenden in place of Mrs. Heather Brown, who retired at the end of March. Before registration, a lengthy – and

rather gruelling – interview took place with the Commission for Social Care Inspection, but at the end of the interview, the inspectors announced that they were satisfied, and shortly after that the registration procedures were finally completed. Mrs. Jean Feaver, the acting Home Manager at Brighton, has also been for her pre-registration interview, and we hope to hear the result shortly.

We were sorry to hear of the death of Miss Ruth Smalley, who passed away earlier this year in July. Miss Smalley was the Local Secretary of the Haydock Home for 19 years, having been appointed in 1981 and continued in that position until the Home closed in June 2000. During her many years of service she proved to be a capable and efficient Secretary in everything she did, and we wish to pay tribute to her valuable contribution towards the smooth running of the Home.

As in all institutions today, our life at Bethesda is highly regulated, and our inspecting body is the Commission for Social Care Inspection, the CSCI. However, the Government seems to have a penchant for change. First, the National Care Standards Commission was set up and came into operation on April 1st, 2002, but within one month it was announced that it was to be disbanded and replaced by the Commission for Social Care Inspection. Then without any consultation the Chancellor, in his budget speech in March, announced sweeping mergers of regulatory bodies, and the next day the Department of Health announced that the CSCI would be merged with the Healthcare Commission by 2008 at the latest. The arguments presented were simplistic, although to be fair, the amalgamation with the Healthcare Commission has more than financial justification. These constant changes are unsettling, and only time will prove whether they result in improvement.

At the moment most Homes are subject to at least two inspections a year, one announced and one unannounced. It has now been suggested that all future inspections are to be unannounced. Bethesda views this as a retrograde step, as it is quite possible that an inspector will never meet the Home Manager if it should happen to be her day off when the inspector visits the Home. In the past it has been stressed how important it is that the CSCI maintains a good rapport with the management of the Home, and the thinking behind this new procedure is puzzling.

One National Minimum Standard that has always caused us concern is the requirement that by the year 2005 a minimum of 50% of care staff should be qualified to NVQ level 2. Bethesda always maintained that this was an unrealistic national target unlikely to be achieved. This has at last been recognised by the Commission for Social Care Inspection, which has now formally relaxed the requirements of the Standard, stating that it will instead adopt “a flexible approach.” With Bethesda’s reliance on short-term staff from Holland, this move is welcome, and sensible.

We sincerely thank all our supporters for their continuing encouragement and interest in the work, a work that lies near to the heart of many. Without our Homes, many residents would be in sad and difficult circumstances, and as we go around the Homes we have many tokens from our aged friends of their thankfulness for this provision in their declining years.

As we now approach the last quarter of another year, we wish to testify to the goodness of the Lord in continuing to supply our needs. Although we have many anxieties over the future, we feel we can say with the disciples, “Lacked ye

anything? And they said, Nothing.” Our desire is that “He who hath helped us hitherto, Will help us all our journey through.” That being so, we shall have “cause to raise, new Ebenezers to His praise.”

The Chairman thanked Mr. Scott for all he does for Bethesda and said Mr. Scott would be pleased to answer any questions during the interval.

CHAIRMAN: We do live in very difficult days on every hand, and prayer is, with God’s help, our chief weapon. May the Lord give us a spirit of prayer that the Lord will turn our captivity, as a denomination, and that some of these things may be resolved to the honour and glory of our God.

The Gospel Standard Trust continues its work. In the Publications there are various books that are anticipated in the immediate future. Two in particular I would mention. One on the Articles of Faith: a small compendium of the Articles of Faith has been produced and our friend Mr. Watts has made some simple comments on each of the Articles to help understand where these Articles came from, and to re-emphasise the precious doctrines that our churches are built upon, which are consistent with the holy and sacred Word of God. It is hoped that our younger friends in particular will find it helpful.

Also another book is anticipated fairly soon. Mr. John Broome has gathered together the writings of Mr. J.K. Popham (not his sermons, but other articles that he wrote), and this book will be published fairly soon. There is one particular article we have been looking for for some months on Regeneration that was published by Mr. Popham at some stage, which we cannot find. The pamphlet is entitled, “Thoughts on Regeneration.” If any friend does know where this is we should be pleased to know.

The collection taken this afternoon will be for the Gadsby’s Hymnbook Fund. The Gadsby’s Hymnbook has been a precious compendium of spiritual experience for many generations, and, though times have changed, those who value the experience of the work of the Holy Ghost will find in that hymnbook many a precious echo in their heart. And we hope it will be preserved for future generations yet.

The meeting concluded with the singing of hymn 1138, and prayer by the Chairman.



Storms and roaring waves sometimes cast upon the shore valuable treasures hid in the sands, and thus, spiritually, tempests and roaring seas often bring to light secret treasure.

J.C. Philpot

ROMANS 8

From Ralph Erskine (1685-1752)

This chapter is like a string of pearls, every one of them more precious than another. The whole of this chapter is consolatory, and holds forth some special grounds of consolation for supporting justified and sanctified ones against all evil whatsoever. We may take up the substance of the chapter in four heads.

1. We have comfort against the condemning sentence of the law, in the beginning of the chapter, to the fifth verse. Such as have union with Christ have no reason to fear the dreadful sentence of the minatory [threatening] part of the law.

2. We have comfort against indwelling sin that adheres even to them that are justified and sanctified; for it shall never hinder the indwelling of the Spirit here, nor the glorious resurrection of the body at the last day, nor the eternal happiness of both soul and body; from the fifth to the seventeenth verse.

3. There is comfort against all afflictions, crosses and tribulations in this world; from verse seventeen to the thirty-third.

4. Not only comfort against all adversity, but against all adversaries whatsoever, and against all charges and challenges, insomuch that believers are brought in triumphing in the God that justifies, so as none can lay anything to their charge; from verse thirty-four.

The chapter begins with no condemnation to the believer, and it ends with no separation from Christ; and to be sure, the top stone has a solid foundation, for nothing can be more certain than this: that there is no condemnation to them, as to whom there is no separation from Christ.

There were little need of promises and such other encouragements as the Word of God is full of, if believers were not brought into such straits and difficulties as continually to need them. Our heart is full of unbelief, infidelity, worldliness, pride, presumption, hypocrisy, and every other hateful sin. Where these evils exist they will manifest themselves, and it is this warfare between flesh and spirit which makes true religion such a continual scene of changes. What deadness is often felt, what darkness of soul, what coldness and hardness of heart, what disinclination, yea what aversion to the things which belong to our peace! Thus we cry out, "Woe is me! My leanness, my leanness! Woe unto me! My soul cleaveth to the dust; quicken Thou me according to Thy Word. Wilt Thou not revive us again, that Thy people may trust in Thee?" Some of God's people are not exposed to gross temptations, but as Newton says of himself, they suffer by sap and mine. The fortress of their heart, that is, is not assailed by storm, but gradually undermined by the slower process of coldness, deadness, disinclination to spiritual things, and a miserable, careless, carnal, worldly, slothful state, which benumbs all the spiritual faculties.

J.C. Philpot

400TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GUNPOWDER PLOT

Years ago everyone was familiar with the little ditty:

“Remember, remember,
The Fifth of November,
Gunpowder treason and plot;
I know no reason
Why gunpowder treason
Should ever be forgot.”

We are told, however, that today more and more it *is* being forgotten. Hallowe'en, so it is said, has become more popular than Bonfire Night. But, apart from this, the *reason* for Bonfire Night seems no longer to be known. So on this 400th anniversary it is well for us to be reminded of what took place.

The world, and even our own country, have been appalled by recent acts of terrorism. But let it be remembered that the Gunpowder Plot, had it succeeded, would have been one of the most dreadful terrorist attacks in human history.

Let us remind ourselves of what happened in 1605.

The Gunpowder Plot was conceived by Robert Catesby. The great historian G.M. Trevelyan states that he and his friends were “agents of the Jesuit party.” To destroy the King would be useless if the Protestant leaders remained, so the plan was to blow up King, Lords and Commons together, and then for the Roman Catholic nobility to seize power. Throughout the country were Roman Catholic gentlemen, in their large houses, with arms and horses ready for the ensuing battle.

One of Catesby's friends, Thomas Percy, hired a cellar beneath the Houses of Parliament. Here thirty-six barrels of gunpowder were stored, covered with bars of iron, and hidden under piles of firewood. A man named Guy Fawkes was appointed to keep watch in the cellar and then, at the right time, to light the fuse to ignite the gunpowder. An evil and malicious plot!

However, one at least of the conspirators was alarmed because friends and relations would be destroyed. So a mysterious letter was received by Lord Monteagle, part of which read:

“mi lord out of the love i beare to some of youer friends i have a caer of youer preservacion therefor i would advyse youe as youe tender youer lyf to devyse some excuse to shift of youer attendance at this parleameant for god and man hathe concurred to punish the wickedness of this tyme and thinke not slightlye of this advertisment but retyere youre self into youre contrie where youe may expect the event in safti for thoughe theare be no apparence af anni stir yet i saye they shall

receyve a terrible blowe this parleament and yet they shall not seie who hurts them.”

In this way God brought the plot to light.

Following this, search was made and Guy Fawkes found in the cellar. Asked by the Lord Chamberlain himself what he was doing, his reply was: “A poor serving man, looking after my master’s stock of firing.”

Early in the morning of November 5th, 1605, Guy Fawkes was captured, possessing matches, fuses and a lighted lantern. The other conspirators fled but were all killed, or captured and brought to justice.

An old Calvinistic Protestant Union tract, *Gunpowder, Treason and Plot*, concluded:

“If the Gunpowder Plot had succeeded, the history of the last three hundred years would have been a different and a sadder one. England would probably have been once more placed under the iron heel of the Papacy, and England’s liberties would have been taken from us for ever.”

In former days November 5th was kept solemnly as a thanksgiving day. By Act of Parliament a form of thanksgiving had to be used on that day throughout the Church of England “for the happy deliverance of King James I and the Three Estates of England, from the most traitorous and bloody-intended massacre by gunpowder: and also for the happy arrival of his majesty King William on this day, for the deliverance of our church and nation.”

The Scripture readings were 2 Samuel chapter 22 and Acts chapter 23, and the following was one of the prayers:

“Almighty God, who hast in all ages showed Thy power and mercy in the miraculous and gracious deliverances of Thy church, and in the protection of righteous and religious kings and states professing Thy holy and eternal truth, from the wicked conspiracies and malicious practices of all the enemies thereof: We yield Thee our unfeigned thanks and praise, for the wonderful deliverance of our gracious Sovereign King James I, the Queen, the Prince, and all the royal branches, with the nobility, clergy and commons of England, then assembled in Parliament, by Popish treachery appointed as sheep to the slaughter, in a most barbarous and savage manner, beyond the example of former ages. From this unnatural conspiracy, not our merit, but Thy mercy; not our foresight, but Thy providence delivered us: And therefore not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name be ascribed all honour and glory, in all churches of the saints, from generation to generation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Clearly November 5th was a solemn day. When the service for that day was omitted from the prayer book, we do not know. It was certainly used right into the nineteenth century.

Nor were the Dissenters amiss in keeping the day. The version of the 124th Psalm by Dr. Watts is headed, "A Song for the Fifth of November," while Gibbons, Dr. Doddridge and Anne Steele each wrote hymns for November 5th.

Dr. Watts has a hymn, "Shout to the Lord!" entitled: "The church saved, and her enemies disappointed. Composed for the 5th of November, 1694" – the Gunpowder Plot only just out of living memory. It contains verses like this:

"Their secret fires in caverns lay,
And we the sacrifice;
But gloomy caverns strove in vain
To 'scape all-searching eyes.

"Their dark designs were all revealed,
Their treasons all betrayed:
Praise to the Lord that broke the snare
Their cursed hands had laid."

The emphasis was: it was God's work, it was God's deliverance.

So as we remember the 400th anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot, again we remember the wonderful mercies of our God to our country in former days. O that we might be brought back to an acknowledgement of this and to national repentance!

A VISIT OF LOVE

My dear Friend – As my letter touched a chord in your heart, so has yours in mine. It brought to mind the Lord's former kindness when also upon a bed of affliction, and in meditating thereupon whilst taking a quiet country walk, my heart was a little softened and my eyes a little moistened. In fact, two or three times yesterday this was the case with me, also a little renewing today, and in my mind I wrote you a few lines which I seek now to commit to paper.

A few years since the Lord put me to bed with these words:

"His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower."

I was very comfortable in my mind, but as the affliction increased, so did my consolations decrease, until I found myself in a very rebellious frame of mind, and I so replied against God that I was afraid of Him and of His Word, so that I could neither pray to Him or read His Word. This was

my miserable condition for about five days, when I asked my wife to bring me Mr. Philpot's *Life and Letters*. I thought possibly I could read this, though afraid to read the Word. In reading, the Lord most mercifully broke up my prison cell, brought me to repentance, self-aborrence, and godly sorrow for my sins; and so completely did He favour me that I could see nothing, feel nothing, but love and blood. I drew the bedclothes over my head and wept, and wept, and wept. My wife entering the room, inquired how I was. I replied, as best I could, "All right inside and out." She had wisdom immediately to withdraw, and I wanted no other company but that of my most adorable, most precious, most lovely Redeemer. You know the sweetness of these visits, and it defies all my efforts to express by tongue or pen a thousandth part of His worth, or to give expression fully to one's feelings at such a time.

We love a touch, but O, these overwhelming visits of our God are more than touches. In speaking of a touch, I remember visiting a dear old saint, and finding him in dire poverty. I said in my ignorance, "This wants a lot of putting straight, doesn't it, old friend?" The dear old man turned his face to me with a sweet smile, and said, "One touch does it." What a reproof entered into my heart, what a fool I saw and felt myself to be; my unbelief had a set back. One touch does it. Yes, you and I have proved one touch, bringing us to submission, has made the crooked things straight and the rough places plain. We get our touches now and again by the way, but those overwhelming visits are very few and very far between; at least I find it so.

Yours affectionately in the truth,

F. Kirby

Frittenden, January 23rd, 1923

This would be Frederick Kirby, pastor at Staplehurst from 1903 to 1934.

Jesus Christ is so high in dignity that no worth can commend any creature to Him, therefore He takes them that are under His feet, poor sinners (upon whom He might tread as upon those in hell), and He can love them as heartily and as familiarly, make them His queen, set them at His own right hand; therefore be not discouraged though you be laid never so low at His feet in the sense of your own vileness, for it is all one to Jesus Christ. The truth is, He hath none else to marry, but those that are under His feet; He must have no wife, if He will not have those that are perfect slaves; yea if He will have the sons of men, He must have enemies upon whom He might tread and trample under His feet.

Goodwin

THROUGH MANY DANGERS

The autobiography of Isaac Lewis of Staplehurst (1823-1896)

Last month Isaac Lewis's own account ended, reaching only to 1881. When the little *Memoir of I. Lewis* appeared shortly after his death, a few details were added (possibly by Benjamin Wickins, who wrote the preface). Much of this is of no interest or value today (e.g. details of chapel enlargement, etc.) and so has been omitted. This makes the spiritual details of the closing years of this worthy man's pastorate very sparse.

The first sermon he preached at Staplehurst was on November 8th, 1874. His text was taken from Psalm 145. 11 (as is recorded by him in the preceding narrative). He gave an account of how he became possessed of his religion, and of the way he went into the ministry. The discourse is well remembered by many who heard it, and was highly commended to their consciences.

At the close of the service Mr. Lewis, on being asked by one of the members (Mr. S.) to come again, replied that he must go where his Master sent him, whereupon Mr S. readily answered, "Then we will endeavour to enquire of your Master," and beyond all question the Master was enquired of, and graciously made it abundantly manifest that the thing was of God.

In a letter written at Burnham, and dated July 6th, 1875, Mr. Lewis speaks of his exercises at this period, and how his mind was most blessedly led out in contemplation of the anointing of David, and the Holy Spirit led him to see and feel that as Jesse's youngest son was anointed king over Israel, so he was anointed to be under-shepherd over the flock at Staplehurst.

He supplied at Staplehurst several times during the year, and on January 2nd, 1876, commenced his labours as a settled pastor, his text being on that occasion 1 Samuel 30. 6, speaking particularly upon the last clause: "But David encouraged himself in the Lord." His prayer sweetly breathed of the inditing of the Holy Spirit, and manifested how solemnly he felt his position in standing as God's mouthpiece.

In February of the following year, there were added five new members to the church. The solemnity of this time is still fresh in the minds of many of the congregation, and it was with no trifling frivolity or sentiment that the beloved pastor led the candidates down into the pool, in the name of the Trinity in Unity, who had thus given him to see the fruit of his labour, and to receive his penny as a faithful and profitable workman in the heavenly buildings.

The growth of the church was again augmented in the following July, thus affording additional evidence that the Word preached was not in vain.

In 1882 a private subscription was got up among a few of the friends, and a purse of ten pounds was presented to Mr. Lewis as a new year's gift, as a slight token of their love and esteem; and although, perhaps, the value of the gift was not large, it came so unexpectedly as to quite break him down with gratitude to his God for another token that he was not forgotten, and to his kind friends in thus showing what a warm spot he held in their hearts and affections.

Towards the close of 1887, the most intimate friends of Mr. Lewis viewed with great anxiety the steady growth of an excrescence of a cancerous nature on his lower lip, of some years standing, brought on, or rather aggravated (in his own opinion) by the indiscriminate use of the clay pipe when on board ship, he, in common with most sailors, having a liking for the fragrant weed. Medical opinion was consulted several times, and at last it was apparent an operation must be performed, as it was causing increased inconvenience and much pain; and on the morning of January 5th, 1888, the operation was performed with great success, and by God's blessing, the cancer was completely removed.

Many of his church and congregation remember with gratitude that period, and many a prayer went up to the Lord from them that the surgeon's hand might be guided, and wisdom given him to use the dreaded lancet aright. Although in the depth of winter, it was a warm, bright morning, and nature appeared as if in command from its God to lend her benign and favourable influence for the welfare of one on whose behalf so many loving hearts were petitioning the throne of grace.

The lip healed in a most satisfactory manner, and although afterwards, at times, an occasional twinge would remind him where the seat of the malady had been, no other trouble or inconvenience was ever after felt from this source; and to calm his mind on this point, the Lord was graciously pleased to apply these words with power: "I am the Lord that healeth thee," and he expressed it as his firm and settled belief that the cancer would never return.

His faith was sorely tried on this point a few months before he died, having caught a severe cold in his face, which caused a most painful swelling on the same lip, and the enemy was permitted vividly to portray to his mind what suffering most probably awaited him; and his friends could not fail to see and feel the dismal view he had of the consequence. The promise given him some years previous was out of sight, and his sensitive mind seemed a chaos of gloom and despondency. However, a friend one evening after service asked him if he had forgotten the promise he had some years ago, and reminded him of the strong faith that

grasped it at the time. This bringing to remembrance was the means used to break the snare. All fears of a return of the malignant cancer, with all the terrible consequences, were dispelled, and in a few days the lip was as well as ever.

The baptismal pool was opened the last time at the end of June 1895, when two were admitted into church fellowship, and perhaps none will miss their beloved pastor more than the young members, they having at all times found in him a warm, loving and affectionate friend, who had their interest at heart, in a temporal as well as a spiritual sense.

His praise is indeed in all the churches, his manly voice having been heard proclaiming the whole truth as it is in Christ Jesus in nearly all parts of England, but more especially in the adjacent counties of Sussex, Surrey, Essex and Berkshire.

Next month, we hope to end the account of Isaac Lewis with a few details of his death and funeral.

BOOK REVIEWS

More Mountain Movers, by George Ella; hardback; 473 pages; price £17.95 plus £3 postage and packaging; published by Go Publications, and obtainable from The Cairn, Hill Top, Eggleston, Co. Durham, DL12 0AU.

This book follows on from George Ella's previous book *Mountain Movers*, published in 1999, which was a series of biographies of Reformers and Puritans. The present volume contains twenty-eight biographies ranging from Wycliffe and Tyndale to Latimer, Coverdale, Hooper, Ridley and King Edward VI; followed by, among others, Bullinger and Foxe; the Elizabethan Anglicans, Parker and Grindal; the Puritans, Perkins, Christopher Love and Charnock; in the eighteenth century, Erasmus Middleton and the Countess of Huntingdon; ending with, among others, such nineteenth century figures as Frances Ridley Havergal and Dr. Doudney.

It is a very wide range of subjects, which rather incongruously starts with six sections on the history of the spread of the gospel in Lapland and the author's experiences among the people of Lapland when working there as a missionary in the period after 1959-1965, when he was in his twenties. This section is of considerable interest, though rather marred by the relation of a student prank which went wrong and as George Ella says "almost cost me my [Christian] witness," and the account of a Lap who under Charismatic influence tried to fly and eventually fell in a dung heap. It would be useful to know some of the primary sources of the historical material.

The biographies are divided by sub-headings and make easy reading. We found those on Miles Coverdale, Bishop Latimer and Erasmus Middleton of great interest. That on Richard Cox contains a detailed repeat of the material in George Ella's book *The Troublemakers at Frankfurt* [2003] which portrays John Knox as the troublemaker. In a footnote, p. 240, in the chapter on Bishop Grindal, the author says he "does not wish to belittle the part played by Knox in the

Reformation,” but he seems to be doing just that, for he speaks of Grindal opposing “Knox’s novelties.”

In the chapter on Christopher Love, the Presbyterian minister, who took part in a plot to restore Charles II to the throne and was executed for it, the blame is laid at Cromwell’s door, though the author admits that the final vote on the matter was taken by the House of Commons. Professor Barry Coward in his biography of Oliver Cromwell [1991] says, p. 84, “Cromwell could not save Love from execution but he was instrumental in securing, in October 1651, a reprieve for his accomplices.”

In the chapter on Anne Hutchinson of the New England Colonies, there is stringent criticism of John Cotton and Governor Winthrop. Anne Hutchinson is portrayed as the martyr of a tyrannical New England Government, the subheading to the chapter being, “The Failure of the New England Experiment.” It is of interest that the *Magnalia Christi Americana* by Cotton Mather, Vol. 2 pp. 516-519, gives an entirely different version of these events.

In a chapter entitled “The Great Ejection,” the subject is not the Great Ejection of 1662, but the removal and consequent sufferings of Anglican clergy during the Commonwealth period (1640-1660), and their replacement by the Cromwellian Government with a diverse range of ministers, many of whom were uneducated. When the Ejection of 1662 is considered, the ejected ministers are portrayed as Commonwealth usurpers in Church livings. George Ella writes, “It must be accepted that [under the Commonwealth] Anglicans were ejected by force from the established church of the day, whereas the clergy, who opted out of the Anglican Church in 1662, did so voluntarily.”

We feel that while the book contains much useful material, there is a constant bias toward the Church of England and against Dissenters, especially Presbyterians. *The Westminster Confession* is criticised for being a state-sponsored document, but the *Thirty-nine Articles* of the Church of England are exonerated, as the Queen was Head of the Church, and acted in her spiritual capacity. In the chapter on Bishop Grindal, the Bishop’s Bible is described as having “advantages over the Authorised Version,” and the original Geneva Bible is described as “a very mixed work.”

The book contains a substantial amount of material which is controversial and out of line with generally accepted views. In these circumstances, it is vital that the book be properly referenced, so that the author’s sources can be checked. George Ella has made a case for historical revision, but he needs to allow his primary and secondary sources to be examined.

The book contains a very extensive bibliography of fourteen pages, which seems out of proportion to the character of the book, which has a popular appeal rather than an academic one. Some books appear twice in the bibliography and one in particular, *The Trial of Charles I*, by C.V. Wedgewood (1964) is inaccurately given in both places. On page 440 the date is given as 1864, and on page 449 the initials are given as V.V. and the date 1966. Both references refer to the edition as the “Reprint Society.” We note also that while the author has very strong views on Oliver Cromwell, (he refers to his Government as the usurpation and Charles I as the murdered King), the bibliography makes no mention of the work of recent historians such as Professor Barry Coward, Dr. Peter Gaunt, Professor J.C. Davis, or Professor John Morrill, all publishing works in the last ten years. He might like to read the article of Professor Morrill in

Cromwelliana 1998, "King-killing no murder." Also the table of contents contains no page numbers, which we found very irritating.

If George Ella's historical reassessments are to be accepted, then I suggest that at the end of each chapter full references are provided, together with a bibliography relevant to each chapter.

J.R Broome, Trowbridge

Life and Ministry of Bernard Gilpin, edited by R.B. Benson; hardback; 504 pages; price £25 plus £3.50 postage; obtainable from Mr. John Crowter, Haystacks, Green Lane, Potter Heigham, Norfolk, NR29 5LP.

Bernard Gilpin (1803-1871) was one of that remarkable little group associated with James Bourne, Sukey Harley and "the six sisters" (Bernard Gilpin's own sisters). Their story has been told in J.H. Alexander's *More Than Notion*. Originally the Vicar of Hertford, Bernard Gilpin seceded for conscience's sake, and for many years was pastor of an independent church in the town.

Apart from Bernard Gilpin's life, this book also contains a number of letters and the remarkable account of his first wife, Henrietta, and how she was led into the truth. The Gilpins had a wonderful ability in writing down the character, spiritual experience and life of those with whom they were intimately connected, and some of these accounts are included.

We understand that there has been considerable demand in recent years for second-hand copies of the original, and these have become scarce. We are sure this publication will be welcomed.

This book is an exact reproduction of the original copy, and we are grateful to John Crowter for making these books available. The original *Life and Ministry of Bernard Gilpin* was published in 1874. The reason for the price is the method of producing just a few copies as required.

But although the persons are designed and allowed unto Him from eternity, who were to receive this grace at His hands, yet as to the manner and circumstances of His dispensing and communicating these blessings, they are wholly committed unto His sovereign will and wisdom. Hence, some He calls at one time, some at another; some in the morning, that they may glorify grace in working all the day; some in the evening of their lives, that they may exalt pardoning mercy to eternity. On some He bestows much grace, that He may render them useful in the strength of it; on others less, that He may keep them humble in a sense of their wants. Some He makes rich in light, others in love; some in faith, and others in patience, that they may all peculiarly praise Him, and set out the fulness of His stores. And hereby He glorifies every grace of His Spirit by making it shine eminently in one or other; as faith in Abraham and Peter, love in David and John, patience in Job; and He renders His subjects useful to one another, in that they have opportunities upon the defects and fulness of each other to exercise all their graces. And so He renders His whole mystical body comely and uniform, keeping every member in humility and dependence, while it sees its own wants in some graces that others excel in; and so the joints and bands, having nourishment ministered and knit together, increase with the increase of God.

John Owen

THE WONDER OF WONDERS

John 3. 16

What wonder of wonders! My soul stand amazed,
It beggars all language to tell,
That God should contrive, bring about and complete
How to save a poor sinner from hell.

This makes angels wonder, and wonder they may,
All heaven must wonder at this,
That Christ should come down and on Calvary die,
To bring poor, lost sinners to bliss.

'Tis a wonder in heaven, 'tis a wonder in hell,
But this is the wonder of all,
That God should leave angels and choose ruined man,
By nature quite dead in the Fall.

This will be a wonder when time is no more,
Eternity will not erase,
The heavens will ring with the anthems of praise,
With wonders of sovereign grace.

Poor sinners will wonder that they should get safe,
Though hell, sin and Satan oppose,
Though they were so weak and temptations so strong,
Though often beat down by their foes.

But wonders of grace will be better displayed
When sinners get safe into glory;
Each one will be wondering how he got there,
But all will be telling one story.

The wonderful love of a covenant God
Is a wonderful story to tell,
While they gaze on the Saviour, who ransomed their souls,
And wonderfully saved them from hell.

What wonders poor Peter must have to relate,
He's never forgot how he fell;
Poor Peter is shouting of wonderful love,
That saved a backslider from hell.

Poor David must wonder when he recollects
What a wonderful sinner was he;
But Peter, and David, and ten thousands more,
Have proved that salvation is free.

What wonder of mercy, what wonder of grace,
What wonder poor Jonah must tell,
When he thinks of the wonders his Jesus once wrought
In dragging his soul out of hell.

Ah! wonder of wonders will fill every soul
That's made a partaker of grace,
They wonder below, they wonder above,
They'll wonder to see Jesus' face.

There's Peter and David, Manasseh and Paul,
With wonderful numbers beside,
Adoring the wonderful love of their God,
Who once on mount Calvary died.

There's the poor wretched thief that once hung on the cross,
A victim on Calvary's tree,
He saw his dear Jesus on Calvary's mount,
Who saved him most wonderfully free.

Thus wonders on wonders will evermore bring
New glories to God and the Lamb,
Salvation through Jesus each one will proclaim,
For ever adoring the plan.

Each one will acknowledge 'twas wonderful grace
That saved such a rebel as me;
When Jesus looked on me and bid me to live,
I found that salvation was free.

O wonder ye heavens, and wonder O earth,
This wonderful love who can tell?
God so loved the world that He gave His own Son
To redeem His own chosen from hell.

Of all these great wonders I wonder the most
That I into hell did not fall;
And if Jesus gives what I now have in hope,
'Twill be the great wonder of all.

I wonder Jehovah has not cut me down,
Such a wonderful sinner as I,
But I venture my all on a covenant God,
And there if I die I will lie.

But die I shall not, for this wonderful grace
I know is both sovereign and free,
Poor, self-condemned sinners need not be dismayed,
Since mercy has saved such as me.

No, wonderful grace will do wonderful things,
It saves from a wonderful hell,
And those who are taught by the Spirit of God,
God's wonders for ever will tell.

They wonder Jehovah should single them out,
And cause them to hear His sweet voice;
They wonder sometimes that their hearts are so hard,
They wonder they cannot rejoice.

And sometimes they wonder they cannot believe,
And wonder what can be the matter,
And thus they go wondering day after day,
And wonder sometimes they're no better.

Ah! these are the wonders my soul often feels,
For I am a wonder to many;
And those who are blind to the wonders of grace,
Their religion is not worth a penny.

Some wonder at this and some wonder at that,
But this is the wonder of all,
That poor, wretched sinners, redeemed by blood,
Lost nothing by poor Adam's fall.

For wonderful love viewed this wonderful plan
Jehovah has fixed in His Son,
In whom the elected stood safe and secure
Ere creation work was begun.

O wonder of wonders, I wonder at this,
That I should be saved this way;
I must have been lost, had it been left to me
But one single farthing to pay.

Then O what a wonder that Jesus should pay
A debt so enormously large,
That all the bright angels in heaven above
Could never have gained my discharge.

And can I but wonder that all this was done
For such a base rebel as me?
Unasked for, unsought for, O wonder, my soul!
All this was done perfectly free.

Then O what a wonder I cannot love more,
Ah! sure I'm a wonderful sinner;
'Tis wonderful grace must complete His own work,
Where Jesus has been the beginner.

Ah! God will complete His own wonderful work,
Such wonders as make heaven ring,
That poor, filthy beggars, on dunghills below,
Should be made sons and heirs of a King.

But how they will wonder who heard of the Lamb
And did His salvation reject,
Who often have sneered and wondered at those
Who dare to say they were elect!

Daniel Herbert (1751-1833)

Daniel Herbert uses the word "wonderful" meaning "to be amazed at," but now and again in a bad sense.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
DECEMBER 2005

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

HE FAILETH NOT

*Sermon preached by Mr. C.A. Wood at Providence Chapel,
West Street, Croydon, on April 12th, 1987*

Text: "He faileth not" (Zeph. 3. 5).

This is the word of God Himself concerning the Lord Himself, a word full of comfort for all who fear God, both small and great.

"He." The Almighty God of heaven and of earth, our God omnipotent, whose power will never, never fail; the Lord our God omniscient, ever knowing all that is in our hearts, solemn as this truth is; and our God who is omnipresent, "For He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." "He." "For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death."

"He" whose word will never be broken; never will His word fail. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." "He" who is able to perform all that He has promised, every word that He has spoken. "He is faithful that promised." "He," the Eternal One, the unchanging God. "Even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God."

"Great God! how infinite art Thou!
What worthless worms are we!
Let the whole race of creatures bow,
And pay their praise to Thee.

"He," the Almighty Jehovah, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

"He," our God in heaven. "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." God rich in mercy: God who "so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." O how great is the love of God the Father toward His dear children, chosen in Him before the world began, loved with an everlasting love because "He faileth not"! "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

"He faileth not." A poor, troubled, burdened, hell-deserving sinner, fleeing from the wrath to come, may rest upon these words so precious;

find here is a rock, here is a refuge, here is a sure foundation, the “yea” of Almighty God. “Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand: and they sat down at Thy feet; every one shall receive of Thy words.”

“He.” God the Father in the demonstration of the love of His heart in the gift, the greatest gift that heaven could give, the Son of His love, the eternal Son of God, equal with the Father, dwelling with the Father from all eternity, who came to this earth because of the purpose of grace, because of that covenant ordered in all things and sure, because “He faileth not.” “Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.” Hell shall not overthrow, sin shall not overthrow the eternal purpose of everlasting love toward all His dear people whose names are found written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, because “He faileth not.”

“So out of pity Jesus said,
He’d bear the punishment instead.”

O beloved, what a gift! The Apostle Paul breaks forth in rejoicing with wonder, in astonishment, in love, at the manifestation of such grace when he says, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.”

“He faileth not.” The dear Redeemer in coming to this earth, taking that body prepared for Him; Deity in inseparable union with sinless humanity, unstained, unspotted by human generation; this dear Redeemer, found in fashion as a man, went forth to the cross at Calvary and there suffered in the room of sinners, drank that cup of wrath, bore the punishment instead. He was made sin for His people: the sword of divine justice fell on the Shepherd of the sheep, and there was that triumphant cry – because our text declares, “He faileth not.” Jesus cried, “It is finished,” the work is done, salvation, pardon, peace, mercy flows and justice is satisfied, the law is honoured, the gates of heaven opened wide. The Almighty is “just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Just and holy is our God because “He faileth not” in His justice, and that will be manifested in the condemnation of the ungodly; it will be manifested also in the reception of all His dear children into glory at last. O beloved, “He faileth not,” and that precious blood shed on the cross will never fail.

“Dear dying Lamb! Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more.”

That precious blood, that efficacious blood, is that blood which cleanseth from all sin. That fountain opened for sin and uncleanness will never, never fail because “He faileth not.” “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

“He faileth not.” Then think of the Holy Spirit. How great is His work, how wonderful the purposes of grace to sinners, that set time “not to propose but call by grace”! That mighty work of heaven when a sinner, born dead in trespasses and in sin (as all sinners are), is quickened by the Spirit, brought into light that shines into the soul revealing his lost state and ruin, revealing a holy God, revealing a hell that is open to receive sinners, yet revealing a way of salvation. The Holy Spirit who breathes life, and brings light, and convinces of sin, is He who leads a poor sinner to Jesus Christ and shows the way of salvation. He takes of the things of Jesus and reveals them unto us. “He faileth not,” and the work of grace begun in a sinner’s heart will never, never fail. “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

“He faileth not.” He who is “the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary.” “He ... hangeth the earth upon nothing.” “He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young”; the lambs and the sheep, loved by the Shepherd who gave Himself for them. “They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” O to think,

“The hand that formed the world,
The earth, the sky, the sea,
The hand once nailed at Calvary,
That hand is holding me.”

“He faileth not.” This is our comfort. Here is unchanging love; here is our faithful God. “Great is Thy faithfulness.” He will not suffer His faithfulness to fail. What a support, what a Rock is Christ to sinners! “Upon this Rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” “He faileth not,” and He will bring all His dear people at last to glory, for the Saviour prayed, “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory.”

“He faileth not.” The context is very, very solemn because these words apply in a way of judgment. “The just Lord is in the midst thereof; He will not do iniquity: every morning doth He bring His judgment to light, He faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame” (Zeph. 3. 5). Solemnly true today: the wicked have no shame, they know not God, but “He faileth not” in the solemn judgments that will be brought upon the ungodly, on all who live and die without hope in God, in Jesus Christ, all who come short of a Holy Ghost religion. God’s judgments will never, never fail. The Word of God speaks of it. In the days prior to the flood, those long years that passed before the flood came: Methuselah 969 years old, all the time he lived was a warning to the ungodly because his name meant, “When he is gone it shall come.”

Behold the longsuffering of our God, and yet, “He faileth not” in the judgment that was then poured forth – and will be poured forth – upon the ungodly, because God, the holy God, is angry with the wicked all day long. How much we would seek grace to tremble at His Word, to seek refuge in a precious Christ, to come with nothing in our hand, pleading all that Jesus has done!

“In that dread moment, O to hide
Beneath His sheltering blood!
'Twill Jordan's icy waves divide
And land my soul with God.”

Friend, this is a solemn word. When that great day shall come and the Judge of the earth shall sit upon that great, white throne, there shall be gathered before Him all people, and that solemn division will be made which will be for ever and ever. He will say to the redeemed, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” He will say to the wicked, “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

“He faileth not.” The judgments of God in prophecy were all fulfilled, and shall be fulfilled. Where is Babylon, where is Nineveh? Tremendous cities, impregnable but, my friends, now no more because of God's judgments. God said concerning Nineveh that it would be overwhelmed by flood. You read that in the prophecy of Nahum, and so it was. The river overflowed and that wall, impregnable according to man, was broken down by flood and the city exposed to the invading army. What about Babylon? There you read in Isaiah that the river would be made dry. “He faileth not,” and so it was. The army of the invading enemy marched up the dry river bed and, as we understand from history, the gate of the city was left open and in marched the enemy. “He faileth not.” Never lose sight of the solemnity of this word in the fulfilment of it upon the ungodly.

But, “He faileth not” is a word of comfort for the redeemed, and the words are true in every aspect. Think for a moment of our providential concerns. “He faileth not.” “While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” “While the earth remaineth.” “He faileth not,” because it will not always remain; there will come a time when this world and the universe shall be dissolved with fervent heat and the heavens rolled up as a scroll. But, “While the earth remaineth,” “The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works.” People may ask why are there famines on the face of the earth? The answer is *sin*. Sin that leads to greed, and the judgment of God is poured forth because of the sin of man. But God is good, God is faithful.

“He faileth not.” There may be times in the experience of God’s people when there is but a handful of meal and a little oil, but thy God lives. O tarry there for a moment. Think of the prophet Elijah; think of the provision that God made; think of the solemn word spoken to that prophet, “Hide thyself.” It is a solemn thing when God stops the mouth of the ministry. There was a famine literally, but also a famine of hearing the Word. But there is God’s care and the ravens are commanded to feed the servant of God; they did not fail; the brook dried up but God did not fail. There is the appointment; this is the way in which our God works. When the widow has just a handful of meal left and a little oil, the prophet comes and the word is given, “Make me first.” There is the test of her faith, but God lives and there is that provision. While the famine remains that little oil and that meal shall never fail because “He faileth not.”

There are times in our providential experience when we are brought, perhaps not literally or financially, although that may be so, but in circumstances where we feel that well-nigh everything has gone; but, “He faileth not.” “Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” Paul says, “My God” – your God, dear fellow-believer, dear fellow-pilgrim, you who fear God – “But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.”

“He faileth not.” O that we might have faith in our God to trust in the Lord at all times, in the time of storm, in the time of trouble, in the time of darkness, in the time of temptation, in the time of loneliness, in the time of bereavement, for “He faileth not.” Think for a moment of the dear apostle in that storm-tossed boat in the Euroclydon tempest; neither sun nor stars in many days appearing, all hope of being saved was given up, but God said: Paul you are to witness for Me in Rome. It seemed as though the dear man and all within the boat would sink to the bottom of the sea, but there appeared unto the Lord’s servant that night the angel of God – says Paul, “Whose I am and whom I serve” – saying, “Fear not, Paul.” So Paul could speak with assurance and trust in his God who would not fail though everything seemed to point to certain death and drowning. “For I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me,” and so it was, because “He faileth not.”

Beloved, in the time of trouble and distress you and I fail. I believe this, I know it, that God-given faith will never utterly fail, it will never be destroyed, it is indestructible, it is that which overcomes the world. But, my friends, we feel sometimes that our faith *will* fail, we feel sometimes that the trouble will be too much for us, the path too rough,

the cross too heavy, the cup too bitter, the way so lonely, the devil so strong, the world so cruel and circumstances difficult: "All these things are against me." "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." But, "He faileth not." Look up. "I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him My salvation."

"He faileth not." You will prove this, that He will not fail in the strength that He will give you equal to your day. Do not look for tomorrow's strength yet; trust your God for tomorrow morning; trust Him day by day. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be," because "He faileth not." "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." "He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." I say to my dear people sometimes, that the Lord does not say that He will always take that burden off you but He will sustain you under it. The thorn in the flesh may linger but, "My grace is sufficient for thee." "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that" – (O what a word it is!) – "the power of Christ may rest upon me."

"He faileth not." "The eternal God is thy refuge." What can destroy thee there? Poor sinner, seeking refuge from sin, from a broken law and from the temptations of the evil one, finding refuge in the wounded side of Christ, what can harm thee there? "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." You will never sink beneath them, friends. We sink very low at times: "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord." Seek grace to look up. You may say, O I fail, I falter, I backslide, I am so weak, I do not seem to stand as I should, do not seem to trust as I ought, do not seem to have that faith that I should have; O what a poor thing I am, what a failure I am, how sinful I am! I thought this morning of that word, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Dear Peter proved it true: though he failed, though he denied his Lord, the Lord never failed him, the Lord never ceased – I can only speak as a man – in His love to Peter despite all his failings. What a look there was, what love there was, what compassion, what sorrow, what restoration as the Lord turned and looked upon Peter!

“He faileth not.” So, beloved, seek grace to look up, to trust. Call upon the Captain of thy salvation when the enemy comes in like a flood. Seek that the Holy Spirit may lift up a standard against him, may prepare a table before you in the presence of all your enemies and cause the evil one to flee from you. He will “with the temptation also make a way to escape.”

What is thy burden, what is thy care, what is thy trouble, what is thy distress, what is thy sorrow? “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” “Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy.” “He faileth not.” But I say, what is thy burden, what is thy greatest concern? Is it this:

“’Tis a point I long to know,
(Oft it causes anxious thought)
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?”

What is Christ to you, what does that precious blood mean to you, what is this gospel of God’s grace to you: is it nothing to you? O you say, Yes, thrice yes. I believe that Jesus died, I believe that He loves His people, I believe they shall be saved at last, but is it for me? Are my sins, which are so great, washed away in that precious, sin-atoning blood? “He faileth not.” Think of this precious gospel, think of the word of the dear Saviour, Jesus Christ, who is “able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Are you a sinner coming to Christ? Ah, you say, that is one thing I do know, sinner as I am; if ever there was a leper, that is I; if ever there was one with an issue of blood, it is I; if ever there was one possessed of unclean spirits, it is I; if ever there was a beggar poor, it is I; if ever there was a poor thing that deserves hell, it is I. But O,

“If I ask Him to receive me,
Will He say me, Nay?
Not till earth, and not till heaven
Pass away.”

“He faileth not.” Friend, here is the word of heaven, here is the word that will never be broken. “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” There will not be one in hell who sought the Saviour, came to Jesus resting on His finished work, pleading mercy, smiting upon the breast – not just words of vain repetition as the hypocrite, but from the heart – who knows the plague of his own heart, knows his leprosy, seeks the Saviour, cries out, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

“He faileth not.” Seek grace then, beloved, trust in thy Saviour, look up to heaven, pray that these rich blessings may flow into your soul.

Tell me, is there nothing whatsoever for you, not a word, nothing to give you any hope? God forbid that I should seek to put anything in your heart that is not there; that will never save you. May your conscience answer – if you were called to draw your last breath within a moment or two, before that last breath was taken in the sight of a holy God, is there a word that you would plead, is there something beneath your feet, is there that between your soul and hell, is there that on which you are resting?

“On the word Thy blood has sealed
Hangs my everlasting all.”

“He faileth not.”

“The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
I’ll never, no never, no never forsake.”

I believe this, that a sinner coming to Christ, hungering and thirsting after Christ, resting on Christ for all his salvation and hope for heaven, is one under the precious blood of Christ, and God says “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” My friends, “He faileth not.”

Then consider this, the final perseverance of the saints of God. “For I am persuaded,” says Paul, “that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” It is a rough path, it is a narrow way to glory, but tell me in your sad moments, your times of trial, can you throw away the little that you hope God has done for you? You say, that is more precious than anything; it is the handful of purpose, I cling to it, it is mine, I cannot let it go. My friend, it is love that will not let us go; it is that which holds us fast; it is being “kept by the power of God,” it is being preserved in Jesus Christ.

“They may on the main of temptation be tossed;
Their sorrows may swell as the sea;
But none of the ransomed shall ever be lost;
The righteous shall hold on his way.”

He will never fail you in your providential path, in old age, in loneliness, in bereavement, in increased temptations, when your physical powers fail; when you cannot do what you used to do, you will need much patience. Some of us are beginning to prove we have need of patience. But, “He faileth not.” “Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.” Poor sinner, thy God has done all

things for thee and, "Your life is hid with Christ in God." "All things are yours ... and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

"He faileth not," and when you come to die – and you will unless the coming of the Lord comes first – in that hour of death these words will stand. He will not fail in that moment but will give dying grace in a dying hour. When I was returning from Canada in a big troopship in the war, crossing the Atlantic with the threat of submarine action, that great boat zigzagged its way across the mighty ocean. When some way from port, in the most dangerous part of the journey where the enemy would linger because the way in was narrower, we were amazed to find that the boat we were on was no longer zigzagging; it was taking a straight course, full steam ahead under full power. What was the secret? There were two destroyers convoying the boat into harbour. I have often thought of it: dying grace will convoy the redeemed to glory. This is our comfort, this is our assurance. "So He bringeth them unto their desired haven." At last all the redeemed shall be gathered in glory because, "He faileth not." That great multitude that no man can number, to sing His praise for a never-ending eternity.

"Happy songsters!
When shall I your chorus join?"

Amen.



IMMANUEL

By Ambrose Serle (1742-1812)

The apostle applies this name to Jesus Christ, and tells us that it signifies *God with us* (Matt. 1. 23). Those persons, therefore, who choose to deny the divinity of our Redeemer, contradict an inspired writer and pervert the meaning of a title which is too explicit and intelligible to be explained away.

This name of Christ was first communicated to Isaiah when the people of Israel were in great distress and sorely beset by two very powerful enemies (Isa. 7. 14). Under the assurance and token of an outward deliverance a promise was given that the Messiah should prevail over every adversary, and that the house of David, or His redeemed, should likewise prevail through Him. The title, therefore, was given Him upon this occasion to express the omnipotence of His divinity; and His people were to bear in their minds, as a sign of their perfect security and deliverance, that He was their omnipotent Immanuel, or God with us. It was a subject for the exercise of their faith, and it was also a declaration

of sovereign grace, by which they might strengthen each other's hands and support the feeble in mind.

It is blasphemous to suppose that the Almighty could err in giving this title, and rash to assert that the prophet applied it to the Messiah without the divine authority. This being admitted, either Jesus of Nazareth is not the promised Messiah; or, being that Messiah, He is also Immanuel, the omnipotent God with His people. This name is so strictly assertive of the divinity of our Lord that there is no subterfuge but that of the Jews, which is to renounce the New Testament, and to deny Him to be the Christ. It is plain, then, from this as well as other names, that *whoever is Christ* must necessarily be the almighty and eternal God. Otherwise the terms in Scripture would be false, and contradict themselves.

The Christian world could derive but little comfort in *one* part of this title, were it unconnected with the *other*. As the almighty *Al*, or *El*, or Deity, He would be rather an object of terror and confusion to guilty and offending creatures; but, as the *El* in covenant, as *God with us*, He is the inexhaustible source of hope and joy to those who believe.

To be God *with us* signifies to be God *in our nature*, God engaged in our behalf and manifested for our salvation, or there is no comfort at all in the idea. In respect of His omnipresent attribute only considered, He is God with all His creatures, who live, are moved, and have their being from Him. There needed not this peculiar title, if it were not to convey a peculiar truth to His people. But, to put the matter beyond doubt, the prophet, in giving out the name, predicts some certain circumstances which should attend the appearance of Him to whom it belonged, and expressly declares that this Immanuel should be conceived and born of a virgin. The evangelists, as one of their first proofs of the truth of Jesus' mission, dwell upon the remarkable circumstance of His nativity, and insist upon it, that He fully and exactly answered the prophetic description. According to them, He is God *with us*, as God-Redeemer, born in our nature, living in that nature upon earth, and being so with us as not to be distinguished from us according to the flesh.

How comfortable, then, is this well-attested evidence that the "Ancient of days" became an "Infant of days," in order to reconcile His people to Himself and make them partakers of His glory! If He had not been God infinite and everlasting as well as Man in mortal flesh, the reward He earned, and the gift of life and salvation bestowed upon His redeemed, even supposing for a moment that a creature could have such blessings to bestow, could not have been (what it is continually revealed to be) equally infinite and everlasting.

But Christ was Immanuel, God *with us*, that He might purchase eternal redemption *for us*. This purchase was made both by the perfect

atonement of His blood and by the invaluable merit of His righteousness. He lived *with us*, in a course of entire and unsinning obedience to the divine law, that we might be justified and obtain the rewards of that obedience *in Him*; and He “offered Himself without spot to God,” that we might be acquitted of all the charges and demands which that law, broken by us, had against our nature and our persons. There was an infinite worth in both His active and passive mediation, for it was not only the blood and righteousness of man, but the “blood of God and the righteousness of God.”

This name was given to Christ as a *sign*; and there is so much grace in it, such an inconceivable fund of goodness and love, that it remains a sign to this day. Many will not believe it, because they think it is too much to be true; and as unbelief is never inactive, what they cannot conceive, they imagine they have a right to contradict and oppose. This was the case when the name was first revealed. Many chose to rejoice in Rezin, and the son of Remaliah, rather than in the sign or revelation which God afforded them of an Almighty Saviour.

It continued to be the case when this Saviour was made manifest in the flesh. Good old Simeon said of Him, “Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a *sign* which shall be spoken against.”

The same observation holds good unto this day. It is become the fashion, and especially among the *liberalists*, and the unprincipled great ones of the time, to speak against Christ, His design and His office, and to bear those down who profess to believe in Him by the poor artillery of human wit, if not of human enmity. Some have been so bold as to try the truth of His divine mission by the test of ridicule; as though anything which an adventurous sophistry can dress in a ludicrous garb, and which a thoughtless multitude may laugh at, must therefore be ridiculous or untrue. It seems, rather, a fallacious mode of getting rid of some arguments, which they have not either truth enough or wisdom enough to answer. A fool’s cap, forcibly placed upon a wise man’s head by a knave, however it might excite the mirth of a crowd, would be no actual disgrace, nor impeachment of his understanding. So, with respect to the things of God, the malice of man, whether covered by a laugh or open in its violence, is rather an argument of their truth than of their falsity. To the natural man they were to seem even foolishness itself; and is it any wonder, then, that they should meet with his banter? It is an honour to the gospel when it is despised by a Julian the Apostate or by a Voltaire. Their scoffs are fulfilments of the Scripture, and before they existed, were foretold. Themselves, without meaning it, give sad yet convincing proofs of its divine authority. Ignorant of true wisdom, incapable of attaining it and miserable with their own, all the amusement they found

upon sacred subjects was a “sporting themselves with their own deceivings,” having nothing but their own deceivings, the wretched effusions of a sensual soul, to sport with at all.

Christ, therefore, fulfilling His own prophecies, is to this hour a sign of reproach, and His gospel remains “for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.” Yet, to His faithful people, however “their lives may be counted madness, and their end without honour,” this very despised Jesus is the sign of salvation and victory over sin, the world and death, and over him also “that hath the power of death, that is, the devil.” The wisdom of God will one day be justified in His children, when the despisers of His eternal truth “shall wonder and perish.” Those who can boldly laugh at the conduct of His providence and the revelation of His grace now, will ere long weep and howl for terror, and call upon mountains and rocks to hide them from His presence, and to ward off His wrathful indignation.

Immanuel, God *with us*, is tantamount to “Christ *in us*, the hope of glory.” And if Christ be *in us*, and *with us* in this world, it is an infallible earnest and an invaluable pledge of our being “with Christ in God” for ever in the world to come. Thus (to use the excellent words of another) “the highest heavens are the habitation of His glory; and the humble heart hath the next honour, to be the habitation of His grace.” What ground, then, for rejoicing is here! Believer, if thou *hast* the *pledge*, thou *shalt have* the *portion*. The faithfulness, the love, the omnipotence of thine Immanuel are engaged to bestow it upon thee, and to bring thee to its eternal possession.

What condescension, what infinite and unsearchable kindness, is here! It would be thought a point of vast humility and beneficence if an earthly king – a feeble frame like all others of dying clay – were to descend from his throne and lift up a filthy beggar to make him the partner of his crown. But the condescension of God is infinitely greater. The Lord of heaven and earth, the everlasting *King of kings*, not only quitted His glorious throne, but became a *Man* like thyself – a Man of sorrows, a Man despised and rejected, a Man who, in His own created world, “had not where to lay His head,” and, finally a Man to bleed and groan and die, not for the safety of His friends, but for the salvation of rebels, of apostates, of enemies. He died for those who could never so much as have thanked Him for dying, did not He add to that wonderful love the additional gift of His Spirit and grace. Almost everyone would think Himself bound in gratitude to pay a particular respect to a person who might have saved an earthly life; but how low is the thankfulness, how poor the return of love is the most ardent affection of the children of God to *Him*, who hath not only saved them to a life of grace and to the possession of a thousand comforts which the world cannot know on

earth, but hath also assured them, by this earnest of their redemption, of a life eternal with Him in heaven!

God *with us* should ever imply the Christian's resignation to God. The will of God should be *his* will; and indeed he can never walk comfortably, nor even faithfully, unless it is. To walk otherwise is not only to walk in sorrow, but in folly. It is a great matter to have our wills in unison with God's, and indeed far above the power of flesh and blood. It is an easy thing to *say*, "Thy will be done"; but when that will *is doing*, and it thwarts (as it usually does) the inclinations of the carnal mind, with its worldly selfish views, then to *feel* a resigned heart to the conduct of grace and providence is a demonstration that "God is in us of a truth." None but the Almighty, who made heaven and earth, can bow the proud, stubborn mind of sinful man to a subjection like this.

A man may easily bend his knees in shows and forms of service, but none but God can bend the heart in a real submission to the divine will. The *light* of free grace alone can make a man conscious of the *worth* of that grace, and of his own dependence from moment to moment upon it. Then "the soul, sensible of its own inability, surrenders up itself to the Almighty Redeemer, and subjects itself to the rules of His dominion, as the clay to the hand of the potter; and so the soul in every nerve of it is loosed, and lies down at the will and disposal of the Lord to do as it seemeth good unto Him; and by this means the soul ceaseth from its own private interest, and submits itself to the merits, mercy and laws of the Mediator, to be dieted, clothed and employed by Him only, and lives no longer by the 'life of its own hand.' He stretcheth forth his hands (to use our Lord's expression on another occasion), and another girds him and leads him whither his fleshly reason would not. He knows never a step of his way, but as the Word and Spirit guide him." [From Dorney's *Practical Discourse of Salvation*.] Yet none can conceive, but those who have experienced a subjective resignation to the mind of Christ, what sweet complacency attends the soul in this almost solitary walk, and what fellowship subsists between Christ and it in this path to heaven, when thus "they are agreed." Resignation to Christ is never neglected by Him; and communion with Christ is (more truly than can be said of any pretended human virtues) its own reward.

It was a just remark, which perhaps the experience of every believer may more or less confirm, "That the surest way of obtaining any mercy from God is to be contented, if it be His pleasure, to go without it." No *mercy* can come from Him, but by His own *will*, in His own *way*, and in His own *time*. If a believer wish to have it sooner, he may find the rod for his impatience, but he must *wait* for the blessing. This is to teach him that hardest, humbling lesson of all vital experience – that as he renounces his *self-righteousness* in *coming* to God, he must renounce his

self-will in walking with God. An idle and carnal Antinomian may talk of the one, but the living Christian alone is enabled to know and effect the other.

Lastly, God *with us* implies *our being with God* for ever. The gifts and the calling of God are without repentance. Whom He *once* loves, He loves *to the end*; and whom He blesses with His grace below, He will crown with glory everlasting above. There the redeemed of the Lord shall behold the unutterable glories of their precious Immanuel: they shall see His transcendent excellence as God, and His amazing benignity and goodness as the God-Man. They shall “come to (the spiritual) Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

Ambrose Serle was not a minister but a Government official. Toplady wrote of him: “Mr. Serle is one of the most learned, most devout and most valuable men I know.” J.C. Philpot said that he was “a gracious, well-taught man in the things of God.” He wrote hymn 964 in Gadsby’s.

JESUS THE ONLY SAVIOUR

From Bogatzky’s Golden Treasury

“And thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1. 21).

Sin is the deadliest foe we have. It cast our first parents out of paradise. It defaced God’s image in man. It brought pain, sickness and death into this world, and a spiritual death into the soul. It causes a distance from God and a dislike to His holy ways. It gives Satan an interest in, and a power over mankind. It once drowned the world and will destroy it at last. It exposes body and soul to the just judgment of a holy God, and will sink every unpardoned offender into everlasting destruction.

How is this deadly foe to be conquered? How is this fretting leprosy of the soul to be cleansed? Reader, be careful in this matter, and seek after a remedy that will be lasting and efficacious. Duties, prayers, tears, sacrifices, morality and partial reformations avail nothing in this case. All below Christ Jesus will prove physicians of no value.

Jesus is the only Saviour. God the Father sent Him into the world to save sinners; His name declares the same. He is called “Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.” His blood is the only atonement for sin. This sprinkled upon the heart by the Spirit, and apprehended by faith, removes the guilt and curse of sin, and speaks pardon and peace.

His grace breaks the power of sin, and turns our former love to it into an utter hatred of it. Thus is holiness secured in the heart and walk, as well as peace in the conscience. He will save from the very being of sin after the conflict between flesh and the spirit is over.

His people are all that believe in Him and depend upon Him for pardon, peace and everlasting salvation. In that happy number, reader, may you and I be found! May we be enabled to look to Him, to receive Him as our Lord Jesus, able and willing to save to the very uttermost! And may we walk as the redeemed of the Lord, in righteousness and true holiness, all the days of our life! Amen.

THE PRICE OF REDEMPTION

John Calvin (1509-1564) on Galatians 3. 13: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Those not used to Calvin will be amazed at the beautiful simplicity with which he preached.

As we have seen, if our only hope of salvation rested upon the condition that we fulfil our duty, we would all be condemned; for we have all fallen short in many different ways and are, therefore, guilty in the eyes of God. Indeed, even the holiest amongst us can never claim to have reached a state of perfection, never again to fall, and free from all infirmity. We are, therefore, led to conclude that we will all be lost and condemned when God calls us to account. This is man's true condition, despite the high regard he may have for himself. Therefore, we need some means of escape from the curse we are under. Otherwise, what good will it do us to have our ears daily assailed by the Word of God? It will only push us closer towards eternal death. Thus, in order that the Word of God should profit and assist us to find salvation, we have to find a way of escape from the sentence of judgment pronounced upon the human race. Paul points out the way of escape to us here: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." He shows us that it was not in vain that our Lord Jesus Christ hung on the tree, for He suffered to bear the curse of all those He would call to salvation.

As we have said, we are all under this curse, which means it was necessary for our Lord to take our burden of sin upon Himself. In the law of Moses, it is written: "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Our Lord commanded that the bodies of the dead should be removed from sight, because it was a disgrace to see a human body thus defiled

and therefore He desired it to be taken away. Yet, when God pronounced this curse upon all who hung upon a tree, He knew only too well what was going to happen to His only Son. For the Lord Jesus Christ did not suffer such a death by accident, nor according to the whim of man. Whilst it is true that He was crucified by unbelievers, it had been ordained by the will of God (Acts 2. 23; 4. 28). As it is written, God so loved the world that He did not even spare His only Son, but delivered Him up to death for us. Indeed, if His death had been determined by Judas alone, who had Him wickedly and forcibly led away, this could not be the foundation for our salvation at all! We must remember that God had appointed it thus, as Peter expounds in greater depth in Acts chapter two, verse twenty-three, where he states that the wicked hands that crucified our Lord Jesus did no more than God had previously determined in His will. Thus, when we read that our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, we must remember that it was all for our salvation, because by this means God was seeking to reconcile us to Himself. Therefore, when God said, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree," He was not ignorant of what was going to occur, for all had been settled and predetermined.

These two facts must be carefully held together – that God has said that whoever hangs upon a tree is cursed, but that it was His will for His own Son to suffer thus. Why was this? He took our burden upon Himself, as our Substitute, and made Himself, as it were, the chief of sinners on our behalf. Jesus Christ became a curse in order to deliver us from the curse of the law. It may seem harsh and strange at first sight that the Lord of glory, He who has all sovereign authority, and before whom all the angels of heaven tremble and prostrate themselves, should be subject to a curse. But we must call to mind what Paul wrote in the first letter to the Corinthians, that is to say, that gospel teaching is foolishness to the human race, who regard themselves as wise (1 Cor. 1. 18, 23). Indeed, in this way, God humbles us for our folly. For there is enough wise and good instruction, if we care to heed it, in the heaven and earth around us; yet we are blind and shut our eyes to God's wisdom displayed in nature. This is why He has opened up a new way to draw us to Himself – through something which we deem foolish.

Thus, we must not judge what we read here, concerning the curse to which the Son of God was subject, by our own human reasoning. Instead, we should delight in such a mystery and give glory to God that He loved our souls so much that He redeemed them at such inestimable cost to Himself. Far from detracting from the majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ, or obscuring the glory which the Holy Scriptures attribute to Him, this teaching provides occasion to glorify Him even more. Indeed, may

we all do so, for here is our Lord Jesus Christ refusing to consider it robbery (as Paul expresses it) to reveal Himself in His infinite glory (Phil. 2. 6). He willingly emptied Himself; He not only took upon Himself a human nature and became a Man, but He also submitted to a most shameful death in the sight of both God and man. How precious to Him we must have been for Him to allow Himself to experience such extreme suffering for our redemption! If we could but taste something of what this implies, we would forever magnify the unspeakable grace which surpasses all human understanding. However, although we cannot comprehend it fully, and can only fathom the hundredth part of it, it delights us to know that we can grasp something of its meaning, however small.

Yet, how this exposes the malice and perversity that is in man! For when Paul declares that our Lord Jesus Christ became a curse for us, it washes over us. There are even those who are so depraved that they will see this as an occasion to behave scandalously, abandoning the gospel altogether when they hear of the way in which Christ has redeemed us. Such people say, "What! Can it be that the Son of God, the fountain of all that is good, and the One who sanctifies us, has been cursed?" To their way of thinking, God has acted in an unreasonable and disorderly fashion. But (as I have been saying), God had to stoop to this "folly" because we did not respond to His wisdom, though the way was clearly evident; thus He exposes our own ignorance. We can only wonder at the mysteries of God, for their significance may be obscure to us and seem strange; for in the face of such wonders, our intellect fails and our powers of reasoning are confounded.

The fact that the Son of God became a curse for us demands a fuller examination of our sinful state. Indeed, we begin to realise that we are detestable in the eyes of God, that is, until our sins and iniquities have been cleansed in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. For even if all the angels of heaven were to be made answerable for us, the price they would pay would be insufficient. The only one able to make satisfaction for our sins is the Lord Jesus Christ. But, when He came to this world, it was not by a display of divine and heavenly power that He paid our debt of eternal death. How, then, did He come? In weakness; indeed, not only so, but He was accursed. If this had not been the case, our burdens would have crushed us and all would have perished in the abyss.

When we understand that the Son of God, the Lamb without blemish, the mirror and fountain of all righteousness, that this One was cursed for us, should we not be horrified at the thought of all our sins and engulfed in despair until God rescues us in His grace and infinite mercy? Therefore, let us be aware that when God says He has redeemed

us from the curse of the law, it is to bring us to a state of complete humility. We can never be humble unless we are first stripped of self-confidence and become ashamed at what lies within us. Then we are frightened and lost, knowing that the wrath of God hangs over us until the remedy is applied to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, our whole life is detestable in God's sight and there is no means of reconciliation with Him apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, who takes away the curse which is upon us and bears it Himself.

Now, each time that we read this passage, we should arise and present ourselves before the judgment seat of God, aware that there is a pit waiting to swallow us up if we remain as we are. Let us feel our lost condition and be ashamed before God. Furthermore, let us magnify the grace bought for us by the Son of God, and be careful not to detract from His worth in any way whatsoever, even though He became a curse. This ought, rather, to stir us to render all the praise that He deserves, for He has proved our salvation to be so precious to Him.

Moreover, let us properly appreciate such a pledge of our salvation and display of the love God has for us, and let us not doubt that we are acceptable in God's sight when we approach Him. For He has redeemed us at such a cost, as Peter shows in his first epistle – not with silver or corruptible things but with the Lord Jesus Christ who became a ransom for us (1 Pet. 1. 18). Therefore, we must trust that whenever we come in His name to ask for mercy, it will be bestowed upon us. But if we come believing that we have a scrap of merit, what good is it? We know how much the Father loves the Son, and how precious His death was in His sight. For this reason, we can have full confidence that God will forgive us and be favourable and kind to us if we cleave to what Paul shows us here: namely, that our Lord Jesus Christ spared nothing for us, even to the point of bearing our curse.



Question. How art thou righteous before God?

Answer. By faith alone in Jesus Christ, so that although my own conscience do accuse me, that I have grievously offended against all the commandments of God, and have not kept any one of them, moreover also that I am prone to all evil; yet notwithstanding (so that I embrace these benefits with true affiance of mind) without any merit of my own, of the mere mercy of God, the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ is imputed and given unto me, as if I never had committed any sin, neither were there any blot or corruption cleaving unto me; yea, as if I myself had perfectly performed the obedience which Christ hath performed for me.

Heidelberg Catechism

BELIEVERS' BAPTISM

From The Gospel Standard, 1892

“The way the Shepherd trod,
We freely choose to go;
Moved by the powerful love of God,
We leave this world below.”

We call it believers' baptism, because it is for believers – yes, for *believers*. We find that on the day of Pentecost, when Peter preached such a memorable sermon, the Holy Ghost worked by his ministry and three thousand souls were converted; they knew not what to do; they were pricked in their hearts about their eternal state, and cried out, “Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?” Then they had faith given them to see Jesus Christ, and were baptized.

This was the way for them, because they were *believers*; so it is for *believers* now, not specially for those that have long-standing faith and experience, but really and truly it is for babes in Christ, as well as young men and fathers. There is no stage of experience that can be spoken of that excludes a child of God from following the Lord Jesus Christ, at least you will not be able to find one in the Scriptures. I have looked in the Testament, for I have wondered whether one should remain a few years, to prove whether he is in the faith or not; whether he should remain four or five years outside a truly Christian church. But I do not find anything of that sort anywhere in Scripture. We read of deacons, that they shall be proved, because the office of deacon is very important – looking after the sick, praying with them and attending to them. So let them be proved, then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. But with regard to church members, I fail to find anything to prove that they should be kept four or five years before they are admitted to the ordinances of believers' baptism and the Lord's supper. We ought, I know, on the other hand, to be careful (I am not afraid of using the “ought”).

I do not know how it is with you, but I seek for life. If I can find the root of the matter – the love of Christ, brokenness of heart, humility and a love to God's people – in persons, I know I am right in encouraging them. I am satisfied about that, whoever might say, “Do not settle people down short of Christ.” Why, my dear friends, poor, troubled sinners need all the little encouragement they can get; and if they get a little encouragement under the Word, or in the ordinances, it does them good.

If I were to appeal to some of you that have been in the Lord's ways many years, that have been baptized, sat at the Lord's table, and are in church fellowship, you would say it has been a blessing, because it has

been a means of stirring you up when dead, carnally-minded and cold. It is a solemn thing to sit at the Lord's table, and it is a solemn thing to walk in the ordinance of believers' baptism. It is a very solemn ordinance; it sets forth the sufferings and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It sets forth the believer's death to the law, to the world and to sin, in and by Christ; and it sets forth his resurrection and life, in and by Christ. I know very well if you could see all it sets forth, you would not need any man to teach you what you hear about, though it might tend to confirm you.

It is a fact, whether we speak, hear or walk in the ways of Zion, we want the blessed Spirit. Now it is recorded, "He that knoweth his Lord's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." I do not say this to bring anyone into bondage, or to drive them into this ordinance, but the Word says so. It is very blessed to see the King in His beauty in the ordinances or in the Scriptures.

Taken from a sermon preached by Henry Bradford of Eastbourne on October 31st, 1883.

"THE COLLIER"

Thomas Clough (1817-1879) was a well-known and well-loved minister in the days of Kershaw and Philpot. A number of his letters were published in the *Gospel Standard*. He always signed himself, "The Collier" – referring to his days down the pit.

Grey Hazlerigg, who prepared an account of his life, wrote: "He was a man that truly feared God, dearly loved the doctrines of free grace, and loved to exalt the name of the Lord Jesus, who had doubtless done great things for his soul. He was a preacher, as many know better than ourselves, of considerable gifts; an able minister of the New Testament."

The following are a few extracts from an account published after his death.

His own words, supplied to David Smith of Siddal, Halifax

The time the Lord first opened my eyes to see myself a sinner is a time to be remembered. I was then living in sin, and loving it well. At that time I was working at a coal mine in the north of England for my daily bread. I was then dead in sin, and cared for nothing. At the pit in which I worked there was a law or rule that no collier should be allowed to go down into the pit within three hours if he was not on the ground at a given time in the morning. One morning I was a few minutes late, and the banksman who had the care of the cage in the shaft refused to allow

me to go down with the other men. As soon as all the men had gone down, I began to abuse the banksman who refused to allow me to go down, when some oaths and curses were exchanged between us.

I then went off the ground to a public house on the opposite side to get something to drink, proclaiming vengeance against my enemy, as I thought. In the course of an hour or two, I was singing merrily, and declaring I would not go to work that day – when news was brought into the public house that every man that had gone down into the pit that morning was killed; and it was soon discovered that the news was too true. In one moment I felt as sober as if I had never tasted any intoxicating liquor that day. I trembled from head to foot, and said to myself, If I had gone down into the pit this morning, I should have been a dead man; and what would have become of my soul?

That seemed to be the first time that I had an impression on my mind that I had a soul, either to be saved or lost. The arrows of the Almighty stuck fast in me, and the terrors of hell got hold upon me. I was then both a convinced and condemned sinner in the sight of God and my own conscience, and I cried out in the bitterness of my soul, “Lord, have mercy upon me, a miserable sinner.”

I passed many sleepless nights and very uncomfortable days in this state of mind; but at last the Lord spoke peace to my never-dying soul, and said, “Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee.”

“Sovereign grace o’er sin abounding!
Ransomed souls, the tidings swell;
’Tis a deep that knows no sounding;
Who its lengths or breadths can tell?
On its glories
Let my soul for ever dwell.”

From that time I began to go to chapel, and was full of zeal for God, as I thought. I soon joined the Arminian band, and concluded they were all as holy as angels, and truly the “excellent of the earth.” I attended their prayer meetings, class meetings and preaching, and was ever ready to lend a helping hand to forward God’s work; and truly I thought this was it. I was soon invited to stand up to preach amongst them and I willingly consented, for my heart was warm with the love of God. I wanted to do something for that God who had spoken peace and pardon to my soul. I preached among those people for several years; in fact, until the Lord opened my eyes to see their error and my own ignorance. He did both, and opened my heart to receive His truth in the love of it. “Bless the Lord, O my soul.”

About that time I was led by the Holy Ghost to see that God had a special people, of whom He says, “This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.” As the Holy and ever-blessed Spirit

was pleased to reveal the glorious doctrines of divine grace to my understanding, I was compelled to preach them wherever I was sent; but I was not allowed to preach them long before the leaders of our society were upon me like a hailstorm, declaring that I was a Calvinist. I must confess that up to that time I did not know what a Calvinist was. These preachers and leading men soon began to persecute me, and to condemn the doctrines I preached as erroneous; and they ultimately turned me out as a dangerous man, saying that if I was suffered to go on preaching such things I should "ruin their flock." At that time the Lord was showing me that He had a "slaughtered flock," and that I must go and feed it; and, thanks be to God, I have been enabled to do so, to a lesser or a greater degree, ever since.

Some time before this took place I had heard of a man who preached the truth in the North, and I went to hear him preach. On that occasion he took for a text Ecclesiastes 2. 14, which reads as follows: "The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness." When the good man had finished his discourse, I said, "I am the fool in the text." I thought I was the greatest fool in the world for ever attempting to speak in the Lord's name; and yet I felt some encouragement to go on declaring what the Lord had taught me, and what He was then teaching me.

Since then I have had many things to pass through of a painful nature, both in providence and grace, both in the world and in the church; but I have been upheld to this day, through Christ strengthening me.

From a letter by his friend Elias Armstrong

We walked many years together in company to the house of God. I remember one Lord's day we were coming from chapel. He was very poor at that time, but had a liberal heart. He saw a man on the road near my house begging; and seeing the man had no shirt on, as soon as he could he got into my house and commenced pulling off his clothes. I said, "What are you about to do?" He said, "If you will lend me a shirt, I will give that poor man mine." I said, "I will not do so." But he did give the man his. Poor fellow, he would give the last copper he had in the world.

Another time, he heard of a poor family that had no bread in the house. He went to the master of the colliery, and when the master saw him, he said, "Now, Tom, what are you wanting?" He said, "Well, sir, there is a family in this place which has no bread, and I want you to give me some money for them." "How much?" said the master. "Well," he said, "half a guinea"; and the master put his hand into his pocket and gave it to him. Mr. C., when he had received it, went and gave it to the poor family; and very thankfully was it received.

Mr. C. was always "ready to do good and to communicate." I well remember him opening the room for preaching in West Hartlepool, where

he preached once a month. He had to walk on one occasion to get there from Percy Main, a distance of twenty-seven miles, to preach the gospel. I remember when he first went to Leeds to preach; he came down from Percy Main with very little money. He had not as much as would pay his railway fare, so Mrs. Briggs and myself paid it. When he had preached at Leeds, the people gave him three pounds, and he gave one to Mark Owen before he got home. The second time he went to Leeds he came from Percy Main with only twopence in his pocket, and he paid one penny for his boat fare and a halfpenny to go over the bridge at Sunderland; so he was left with two farthings. He went to sleep at Mr. Turner's; and after supper, as he was going to bed, Mrs. Scott said, “Mr. Clough, I have got ten shillings for you, which a friend left the other day.” Mr. C. said, “That is just what I want for my fare to Leeds. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name.”

I think, poor man, he has just got through this wilderness with strength enough, but none to spare.

From a letter written by Thomas Clough

In consequence of a slack trade, I went down into Scotland from the Newcastle district, and commenced sinking pits for ironstone and coal. We had sunk one near Carluke, and got little or nothing for doing it, as the proprietor withheld the money we should have had. I went about forty miles to get work at another place, and all the money we had was ten pence; so my wife insisted upon my taking eight pence, and she and four children had to subsist on a little oatmeal and the other two pence until I could get some money sent to them. I soon got to the place that I had to work at, and got a Post Office order for six shillings, which I sent directly with a glad heart.

After two days I received a letter from my wife, informing me she had nothing for the children to eat, and nothing for herself, and that they were very hungry. I cannot tell you the distress this occasioned me. I went down into a field, which, as it was winter time, was covered with about twelve inches of snow and, it being dark, I fell down in the snow and really groaned and cried to the dear Lord to have mercy upon me, and to spare my wife and children. I had been in a backsliding state for some time, and this was like a dagger in me; but instead of meeting with a rebuff, as I justly deserved, I found most wonderful relief in the words, I believe, for it is a long time since, “The eternal God is thy Refuge”; and I felt sure deliverance would be granted.

A few days after, my wife wrote to me that a woman had been awakened in the night by a dream about her and the children, that they were dying for want of the necessities of life, which was true, for she

had put the children to bed crying for bread, and she was almost broken-hearted with the trial. This woman aroused her husband, and he took a basket, and went and called a few neighbours up, and collected money and food sufficient to serve them for six weeks, I believe, and came and opened the door, and set it down, and went away and left it. When my wife awoke, for she had fallen asleep in her trouble, she was surprised to see the basket, and very soon had the children up to receive a part of its contents. She wrote to me and told me that, after this intervention of a kind and gracious God, the Post Office order came to hand, and all others were delivered in their due order.

My rebellious heart melted under this kindness, and O how I felt the dear Lord's goodness for a time! But alas, alas! I soon became, like Israel of old, forgetful of Him, and His works and goodness.

Supplied by David Smith

I remember Mr. Clough telling me some years ago of his having to go and preach at some place in the North. The distance from his home was about fifteen miles. He had only three halfpence in his pocket, and therefore had to walk all the way. After he had left home a snowstorm set in; and by the time he had got about seven miles on the road the evening shades drew on, and the storm was so heavy that it was impossible to get through without being lost in the snow. He therefore made for a farm house near some village that lay before him. He went into the house, and asked for shelter until the storm abated. The good woman of the house, the farmer's wife, said, "Yes; come in and sit down." He did so; and after being seated a short time felt faint, and asked the woman if she would sell him a pennyworth of milk. She said, "With pleasure," and brought it to him in a basin. He then asked her if she would also sell him a half-pennyworth of bread. This was all that remained of his travelling money for the entire journey; but he was to retain so much for the next day, as the good woman said, "I will give you a piece of bread, and you may keep your halfpenny in your pocket."

"For when the Lord's people have need,
His goodness will find out a way."

When Mr. C. had got his milk and his bread together, he asked the Lord to bless it to the strengthening of his poor body, and the woman looked on with surprise at her guest. When he had eaten it, he looked out at the door of the house, and the storm was still blowing and the snow increasing. He returned to the hearth, and sat down again on his seat, which was a large old-fashioned piece of furniture like a sofa, or what the Yorkshire people call a "longsettle"; and he said to the farmer's wife, "Perhaps you would allow me to sit on this couch all night if the storm

continues.” She said, “That I cannot promise you at present; but my husband will be in soon, and I will ask him.” Her husband had gone out into the barn to milk his cows and fodder his cattle for the night; but, as his wife said, he soon came in with his milk-cans.

After putting the milk into bowls in the cellar, he came and washed himself, and put on his better clothes, and came and sat down by the fire. His wife then said, “Here is a stranger come in out of the storm for shelter, and he has been asking if he may stay and lodge with us tonight, as it is not fit for anyone to travel in the snow and storm.” Her husband looked at Mr. Clough, and said, “Well, you shall stay with us tonight, for I think you will do us no harm by the look of you.” Afterwards he said to Mr. C., “Will you go with me to our chapel, as we have preaching there this evening?” Mr. C. said, “O yes! I will go with you, with pleasure; but what sort of man is going to preach tonight?” The farmer said, “He is a stranger, coming from a distance, but he is what I call a milk-and-water sort of preacher, if you know what that means.” Mr. C. said, “I think I understand what you mean.”

They both went to the chapel and, although a stormy night, the little chapel was full of people to hear the stranger that should have come; but he, as well as Mr. Clough, had been prevented by the storm and the snow. So there was a chapel full of people, but no minister to preach to them. The farmer turned round to Mr. Clough, and said, “Would you have any objection, my friend, to giving out a hymn and praying for us? We are put to the lock.” Mr. C. said, “I will try and do what I can.” So he went into the pulpit, gave out a hymn, and prayed; and then gave out another hymn; and when that was sung he read a text, and preached from these words: “Ye must be born again.” Only a few of the people knew that Mr. Clough was not the man who was appointed to preach; but the thing doubtless was of God. The Lord blessed that preaching to the soul-profit of the people, and to one man in particular, as Mr. Clough told me.

About nine years afterwards Mr. C. was engaged to go and preach an anniversary sermon about sixty miles away from the same place; and when the service was over in the evening, a poor, thin-looking woman, worn down with labour from attending to a brother of hers who had been confined on a bed of affliction for many months, said, “Will you come with me and see my brother, who is very ill?” Mr. C. went; and as soon as he entered the sick man’s chamber, the poor man said, “That’s the man! That’s the man!” Mr. C. said, “What do you mean, my friend?” The sick man, who had not been able during six months to turn himself in bed, raised himself up in his bed, and said, “You are the man who preached in such a village one stormy night about nine years ago; and that was the time God saved my soul.” Mr. Clough and the man wept together, and rejoiced together. “Wonders of grace to God belong.” “He must needs go through Samaria.”

THROUGH MANY DANGERS

The autobiography of Isaac Lewis of Staplehurst (1823-1896)

We conclude with the account of his last days and his funeral.

For some time before his departure, he was evidently ripening for glory. And many a time in the pulpit he appeared lifted high above the things of time and sense, and we often thought of an expression of the late Dr. Doudney, when he spoke of "how blessed it would be to be talking *of* Jesus one minute, and the next talking *to* Him."

He had recently been much favoured in preaching and in private, and a few Sundays before his death he spoke of the sweetness that he had felt from the Lord in his meditations, remarking that he did not know what the Lord was about to do with him. While preaching at Mayfield he seemed much favoured, and saw so much fulness in the subject (Psalm 23) that, as he said, he felt he could have spoken from it three times three. After the service, a woman who heard him said to him that she believed if ever she got to heaven she should sing the loudest of all. Mr. Lewis replied, "And I think I shall too."

Kent's hymns were particularly blessed to Mr. Lewis, and few days passed without his turning over the leaves of the well-worn book to find a sweet portion for his morning's contemplation. And after his death a leaf was found turned down on the hymn:

"The Christian dying in hope of Eternal Life."

"In hope of life eternal given,
Behold a pardoned sinner dies;
A legal, blood-bought heir of heaven,
Called to his mansion in the skies.

"He left the world with all its toys,
For better, brighter worlds on high;
His faith embraced substantial joys,
Soaring beyond the starry sky.

"From Pisgah's top, by faith he saw
The land where milk and honey flows;
Nor could the power of hell below
Prevail to break his sweet repose.

"He trod the shades of gloomy death,
Could set his seal that God was true,
Finished his course and kept the faith,
For God kept him his passage through.

"Methinks I see him now at rest
In the bright mansion love ordained;
His head reclines on Jesus' breast,
No more by sin or sorrow pained.

“Why should our eyes with sorrow flow,
Or bosoms heave the painful sigh?
When Jesus calls, the saint must go,
'Twas his eternal gain to die.

“’Twas through the strength of Israel’s King,
He proved a conqueror when he fell;
'Tis to the praise of grace we sing,
Though of a dying saint we tell.

“Fearless he entered Jordan’s flood,
At peace with heaven he closed his eyes;
His only trust was Jesus’ blood,
In sure and certain hope to rise.”

The following is taken from the *Kent and Sussex Post*, for Saturday, September 5th, 1896:

“Death of Mr. Isaac Lewis

“It is our melancholy duty to record the death of Mr. Isaac Lewis, twenty-one years Pastor of the Strict Baptist Church of this parish, which took place early on the morning of Saturday last. Although three years beyond the allotted age of man, being born August 22nd,* 1823, the news of his decease was a matter of sad surprise to all who heard the dismal sound of the knell announcing his departure, as on the previous Sabbath he was known to have preached three sermons at Mayfield, in Sussex, returning home to Staplehurst the following day. He had not been quite up to his usual standard of robust health for some days previous to his visit to the sister county, but not sufficiently indisposed to cause any undue anxiety to his immediate friends. On the Thursday preceding his death he was seized with violent pains of a gastric nature, and medical aid was deemed advisable, and for a time he found slight relief, but the malady had got too firm a hold to yield to the skill and attention of his medical adviser, and he gradually sunk and passed away quietly and calmly at five o’clock on Saturday morning. His first and only visit to Mayfield to preach his last sermon is not without pathetic pathos, being on his 73rd birthday, and to fill a pulpit recently rendered vacant by the death of a brother minister [Eli Page], and the same pulpit occupied once a month for many years by his predecessor, Mr. William Burch, his text being taken from the opening verses of the twenty-third Psalm.

“The remains of the deceased were interred in the churchyard at Staplehurst, on Tuesday, with every mark of that sincere respect, so

* Mr. Lewis being born, as he himself declares in his autobiography, on August 13th, 1823, his visit to Mayfield could not have been on his 73rd birthday, but 10 days after; the above is, however, as it appeared in the newspaper. (Original footnote)

deservedly bestowed upon the departed for so many years by all grades of people.

“The coffin, of plain, substantial unpolished oak (characteristic of him who reposed within) was taken into the chapel at 2.30, and a short, but most appropriate service was conducted by Mr. Frost, of Jarvis Brook [George Frost, pastor at Jarvis Brook (1883-1904)], a most intimate friend of the deceased for many years, after which the mournful cortege slowly wound its way to the graveyard, followed by from two to three hundred people, whose demeanour showed how fully they were aware of the sad loss the parish had sustained. The coffin was lowered into the grave in solemn silence, possibly deepened by the conspicuous silence of the bell, and a most earnest address and prayer by Mr. Frost brought the sad ceremony to an end, and mother earth hid from sight all that is mortal of one whose integrity, uprightness and sincerity, rare gifts and abilities, have been questioned by none who knew him since he came to reside at Staplehurst twenty-one years ago, and whose memory will be ever green and fragrant to his sorrowing church and congregation.”

[It is to be noted that this is not from a religious publication but from the local newspaper. What a sad diminishing of outward respect for gospel ministers there has been during the past century!]

Mr. Robert Field, pastor at The Dicker, has given us a few interesting details about Isaac Lewis. Mr. Field's grandmother was a member of his congregation in the early years of her life, and said she had never heard a preacher like him; his preaching was so full of Christ.

She remembered one occasion when, having to calve a cow, she could not attend chapel, but Mr. Lewis's voice was so strong she could hear him out in the fields.

The last three Lord's days before he died, he closed by lifting his hands above his head, and cried,

“My soul anticipates the day,
Would mount up on wings, and fly away,
To joys beyond the skies.”

Truly, “The memory of the just is blessed.”

What a battle-field is the heart, and there the fight is lost and won. When sin prevails, mourning over its wounds and slaughter; when grace and godly fear beat back temptation, a softening into gratitude.

J.C. Philpot

NEW BOOK ON HYMNS AND HYMNWRITERS

For a long time I have been asked, and even pressed, to write a book on our hymnwriters. There has even been a request from the U.S.A. for me to attempt a complete revision and re-writing of John Gadsby's *Memoirs of Hymnwriters* (which, incidentally, is a book much undervalued). But there have been so many books published recently on hymns and hymnwriters and so I have attempted something different – lesser known hymnwriters. Sometimes, after a service, people may ask: "Who was W.W. Horne?" or, "Do you know anything about Fellows?"

I have found the lesser known hymnwriters most interesting people – two belonged to the nobility and five were ironmongers or shoemakers! Some of them had peculiar trials – one inadvertently killed a man; another, for speaking inadvisedly about Napoleon, was sent to prison. And some of them, though little known as hymnwriters, were certainly not little known as ministers, whom God greatly used – for instance, John Berridge and Rowland Hill.

But above all there are the beautiful hymns (one included at the beginning of each chapter) and the gracious experiences. Many of them were wonderfully blessed when they came to die. Henry Fowler said, "My God, my God, take me to Thee to see Thy face, and sing Thy praise"; John Kent: "I am accepted – accepted"; Joseph Irons: "Precious Jesus! How I love Him! How I long to see Him as He is!"

I hope this book will be interesting, suitable for a prize or a present, but above all that it will be spiritually profitable, and to the honour and glory of God. I hope the book will have a wide circulation because it would be a wonderful thing if our dearly-loved hymns were better known.

Over thirty hymnwriters are included, and the book bears the title *Some Lesser Known Hymnwriters*, with the sub-title, "Sing Aloud in Jesus' Name" (taken from hymn 90: "Now begin the heavenly theme). Pictures of each hymnwriter are included where available.

Though we feel so often at a distance from Him, He is never at a distance from us; and as a proof of this there are from time to time revivals of faith and hope and love. And what a mercy too, that the whole work of grace from first to last does not depend upon ourselves or upon anybody else, but depends altogether upon His faithfulness who cannot lie.

J.C. Philpot

In all worldly joys, there is a secret wound.

Owen

BOOK REVIEWS

An Exposition of the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians, by John Davenant; hardback; 952 pages; price £19; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Davenant on Colossians is a Christian classic. When we think of writings on the separate books of Scripture, we think of Caryl on Job, Haldane on Romans, Greenhill on Ezekiel, Owen on Hebrews, and so on – and among them Davenant's commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians.

John Davenant (c. 1576-1641) was Professor of Divinity at Cambridge University in the reign of James I and for the last twenty years of his life Bishop of Salisbury. It must be remembered that most of the Bishops in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and James I were Calvinistic. Davenant was a member of the famous Synod of Dort (1618) which drew up "the Five Points of Calvinism" – as opposed to Arminianism. He was once known as "the jewel of the Reformed churches."

Originally written in Latin, this exposition of Colossians was translated by Josiah Allport, minister of St. James's, Birmingham, in 1831, and has been highly esteemed. The translator included a life of John Davenant and copious notes. This is a reprint of the 1831 translation.

Though Davenant speaks strongly against Romanism, his commentary is a little sacramental in places when he writes on baptism (for instance, in chapter 2, verse 12), though he does clearly state (page 441) that baptism was originally by immersion.

Davenant often quotes from the ancient Fathers, and the translator/editor adds most useful footnotes. We were interested, for instance, to read who the Ebionites were and who Fulgentius was!

About twenty-five years ago a limited edition of Davenant on Colossians was published in the U.S.A., but we believe this is the first publication in Britain for nearly two hundred years. As such we warmly welcome it.

We have received a copy of *Made Sure: Bernard Gilpin (1803-71): A Faithful Gospel Ministry and its Fruits*, by P.A. Bradley.

We understand this book came into being after Mrs. Bradley, through a family connection, came across various manuscripts in the Gilpin/Benson family, hitherto unpublished. Of special interest are some of the letters of Bernard Gilpin's wife, Henrietta. This is, therefore, a *new* book on the Gilpins, which we hope to review next month. It is a hardback, 461 pages, selling at £14.50 plus £3.27 postage till March 31st, and afterwards £19.50 plus £3.27.

Published by The Huntingtonian Press, it is obtainable from 72a Upper Northam Road, Hedge End, Southampton, Hants., SO30 4EB.

The Huntingtonians, by J.C. Philpot; 252 pages; hardback; price £14 post free till December 31st, and afterwards £16.50 plus postage; published by and obtainable from The Huntingtonian Press.

This book contains eighteen book reviews written by J.C. Philpot, reprinted from the *Gospel Standard* and arranged in four parts: the first being reviews on books either written by William Huntington or about him; the second headed "His Immediate Circle," contains reviews on the lives or writings of Isaac

Beeman, Joseph Chamberlain, James Bourne, John Rusk and John Vinall; the third entitled, "His Extended Influence," contains reviews on the lives of Frances Wernham, John Grace, James Lewis and Mrs. E. Parsons; the fourth headed, "James Bourne's and Bernard Gilpin's People," contains reviews of the lives of Sukey Harley, Richard Dore and Hannah Judd.

Each review begins with an introductory essay on a spiritual subject connected with the book. Reading the books obviously led J.C. Philpot's mind into a channel of meditation on some spiritual aspect of the work under review, giving rise to a discriminating discourse which adds value to the reviews. "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12. 34), or the pen writeth.

He says on page 250, "Our great desire for ourselves in personal experience and in all that we bring before our readers, either written by our own pen or that of others, is faith which stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

We recommend this book to all lovers of sound, experimental truth.

J.A. Hart, Chippenham

Masters of the English Reformation, by Sir Marcus Loane; hardback with illustrations; 310 pages; price £15.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

When walking through the centre of Oxford, the visitor comes to a memorial with this inscription: "To the glory of God, and in grateful commemoration of His servants, Thomas Cranmer, Nicholas Ridley, Hugh Latimer ... who near this spot yielded their bodies to be burned, bearing witness to the sacred truths which they had affirmed and maintained against the errors of the Church of Rome, and rejoicing that to them it was given not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for His sake."

Masters of the English Reformation was originally published by The Church Society fifty years ago to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the deaths of Latimer and Ridley (Cranmer was martyred the following year). We are grateful to the Banner of Truth Trust for republishing this valuable book to mark the 450th anniversary of the martyrdoms. Sadly the story of the martyrs is not so well known today.

This book gives an account of five eminent men, who were important figures in the Reformation in England: the three mentioned on the memorial, along with Thomas Bilney and William Tyndale. Each was condemned to death for his courageous stand for the truth. "Little Bilney" is not so well known as the others but he was a most attractive personality: "one of the most lovable characters of the English Reformation"; "frail and diminutive in health and stature ... absorbed in prayer and the reading of the Scriptures."

The work of God in the English Reformation is told through these lives; and, indeed, the Reformation in England was to a considerable extent the result of the Holy Spirit's work giving a gracious experience of the truth through individual reading of the Scriptures.

Sir Marcus Loane (Canon Loane at the time the book was written) was Archbishop of Sydney, Australia, from 1966 to 1982 and Primate of all Australia. (It is well known that the Diocese of Sydney has maintained a firm stand for Biblical truth.)

Masters of the Reformation is beautifully written; it is a serious study but is suitable for a present. We are reminded of England's great need today for men of grace and courage as these five martyrs.

THE END OF THE YEAR

Let hearts and tongues unite,
And loud thanksgivings raise:
'Tis duty, mingled with delight,
To sing the Saviour's praise.

To Him we owe our breath,
He took us from the womb,
Which else had shut us up in death,
And proved an early tomb.

When on the breast we hung,
Our help was in the Lord;
'Twas He first taught our infant tongue
To form the lisping word.

When in our blood we lay,
He would not let us die,
Because His love had fixed a day
To bring salvation nigh.

In childhood and in youth,
His eye was on us still:
Though strangers to His love and truth,
And prone to cross His will.

And since His name we knew,
How gracious has He been:
What dangers has He led us through,
What mercies have we seen!

Now through another year,
Supported by His care,
We raise our Ebenezer here,
The Lord has helped thus far.

Our lot in future years
Unable to foresee,
He kindly, to prevent our fears,
Says, "Leave it all to Me."

Yea, Lord, we wish to cast
Our cares upon Thy breast!
Help us to praise Thee for the past,
And trust Thee for the rest.

John Newton (1725-1807)